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MARICA FRANK

SENECA'S *PHOENISSAE*

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SENECA'S
PHOENISSAE

INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

BY

MARICA FRANK

E.J. BRILL
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For Lucia Richards,
optimae magistrae

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PREFACE

The authenticity of Seneca's *Phoenissae* has rarely been questioned, yet, despite the revival of interest in Senecan drama over the last two decades, the play has attracted comparatively little attention among scholars. Even books and articles which claim to explore all the genuine plays of Seneca often ignore the fragmentary *Phoenissae.* Only two substantial individual studies of *Phoenissae* have been undertaken this century: Adolf Paul's *Untersuchungen zur Eigenart von Senecas Phoenissen* (Bonn, 1953) and Theo Hirschberg's *Senecas Phoenissen: Einleitung und Kommentar* (Berlin, 1989), to which I am considerably indebted. A second commentary on Seneca's *Phoenissae* may seems otiose, but the two works are very different, not only in scale, but also in emphasis: Hirschberg's interests are primarily philological, whereas I concentrate on a literary analysis of the text, although I also include comment on textual and grammatical points.

This book originated as a Ph.D. thesis, submitted to the University of St. Andrews in 1989. Since then it has been substantially revised and new material added. My warmest thanks go to Harry Hine, who 'inherited' me as a research student when he joined the Department of Humanity at the University of St. Andrews, and who supervised my work for several years by letter across the Atlantic without ever having met me. He also read and commented on portions of the revised book and gently enlightened my ignorance on numerous matters. I have learnt a great deal from him and am enormously grateful for his thoroughness, patience, acute criticism, and unfailing encouragement. My thanks go, too, to Elizabeth Craik, for her initial supervision of the thesis and her continued warm support; to Desmond Costa, who examined the thesis and made his comments available to me; to Kathleen Coleman, who nobly read the whole manuscript and made many useful suggestions for revisions; to David Scourfield, whose rigorous comments on a portion of the commentary have, I hope, helped me to improve the whole of it; to Mary Scott, who made time to assist me with proof-reading; to Pat King, who typed part of the manuscript; and, finally, to my husband, Gary, who patiently endured my anxieties, frustrations, and outbreaks of temperament.

Marica Frank
Johannesburg 1994

REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

In general, abbreviations for Greek and Latin authors and works follow the practice of LSJ and LHS respectively. I follow *L'Année philologique* with regard to the abbreviation of periodicals with the exception of *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, which I abbreviate to *HSCPh*, following common practice. For all references to, and citations from, Seneca's plays I use Otto Zwierlein's OCT, unless otherwise stated.

Editions of Seneca's dramas are cited by editor, and occasionally, to avoid confusion, by editor and short title; full details may be found below. Books, journal articles, collections of ancient texts, and reference works are cited by author or by author and short title if they are cited more than once.

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Abbreviations

Adams, *Lat. Sex. Vocab.*	J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore, 1982).
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin and New York, 1972–).
Armisen-Marchetti, *Sapientiae Facies*	Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, *Sapientiae Facies: Étude sur les images de Sénèque* (Paris, 1989).
Axelson, *Unpoetische Wörter*	Bertil Axelson, *Unpoetische Wörter: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der lateinischen Dichtersprache* (Lund, 1945).
Axelson, *Korruptelenkult*	Bertil Axelson, *Korruptelenkult: Studien zur Textkritiek der unechten Seneca-Tragödie Hercules Oetaeus* (Lund, 1967).
Bentley	Edmund Hedicke, '*Seneca Bentleianus*' in *Studia Bentleiana* (Freienwalde, 1899).
Billerbeck	Margarethe Billerbeck, *Senecas Tragödien: sprachliche und stilistische Untersuchungen* (*Mnemosyne Supplement* 105) (Leiden, 1988).
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Bömer	Franz Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen*, 3 vols. (Heidelberg, 1977).
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KS	R. Kühner and C. Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache, zweiter Teil: Satzlehre*, 2 vols. (2nd. edn., Hanover, 1912–14).
LHS	M. Leumann, J.B. Hofmann, A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1965–77).
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N²/Nauck²	Augustus Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* (Leipzig, 2nd. edn. 1926).
NH	R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book I* (Oxford, 1970) and *Odes Book II* (Oxford, 1978).
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OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford, 1968–82).
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——, *Seneca's Drama*	Norman T. Pratt, *Seneca's Drama* (Chapel Hill and London, 1983).
RE	*Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. A.F. von Pauly, G. Wissowa, *et al.* (Stuttgart, 1893–1980).
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TLL	*Thesaurus linguae Latinae* (Leipzig, 1900–).
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INTRODUCTION

1. Title

The title by which the play is generally known, *Phoenissae*, is the one found in the *E* MSS; in the *A* MSS[1] the play is called *Thebais*. Both titles are problematic. There is no evidence to suggest that Seneca intended to emulate Euripides by having a chorus composed of captive Phoenician women; indeed, it is difficult to see how they could have been incorporated into the first section (1–362), which takes place in the wild countryside near Cithaeron.[2] *Thebais* is even less promising: it is associated with epic rather than tragedy[3] and it is inappropriate to the first part of the play, since traditionally it was applied to the story of the Seven against Thebes.

There seem to be two possible answers to the problem: either, as Leo suggested (*Obs. Crit.*, 75–82), Seneca did not name the work since it was never completed[4] and the two unsatisfactory titles are later accretions, or, less plausibly, Seneca tentatively entitled the play *Phoenissae* after the Euripidean play before he had given consideration to the problem of the chorus, and an interpolator emended it to *Thebais*.

2. The Nature and Structure of Seneca's *Phoenissae*

Phoen. bristles with structural problems. Firstly, it appears to be incomplete. This is suggested by the absence of choral lyrics[5] and, possibly, of a prologue,[6] and by the abrupt ending and the resultant unresolved dramatic situation: Oedipus is left hiding in a cave (359–60), Polyneices, exiled by Eteocles (652–3), remains at the head of a

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[1] On the MSS, see Intro., 45.

[2] Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 78) asked: *et qualem ibi* [i.e. *incerta inter Thebas Cithaeronemque regione*] *chorum sibi sumat? certe quem praeter satyros bacchasue Euripidias inuenire potuerit nullum scio.* On the problem of the identity of the putative chorus, see Intro., 9–10.

[3] In addition to Stat. *Theb.*, two fragments of an early Greek *Thebais* are preserved in Athenaeus 11.465e and the scholion on S. *OC.* 1375; Pausanias praises it as the best epic poem apart from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and it was often ascribed to Homer in antiquity (9.9.5).

[4] On this, see Intro., 11–12.

[5] See Intro., 8–10.

[6] See Intro., 12–16.

large army outside the walls of Thebes, and the future of Jocasta, who has come out in opposition to the tyrannical ambitions of Eteocles, is still uncertain. Secondly, the other genuine Senecan dramas[7] all consist of five more or less connected acts in iambic trimeters divided by four choral odes,[8] while the main division in *Phoen.* is into two distinct and, at least superficially, unintegrated sections: 1–362, in which Oedipus is the main character, and 363–664, in which Jocasta is prominent. Further sub-division into four separate acts can be discerned: 1–319,[9] 320–362, 363–442, 443–664.[10] These acts are of uneven length and the second, at forty–three lines long, is exceptionally short: the shortest act in the authentic plays that have choral odes is the prologue to *Med.* which is fifty-five lines long.[11] Two changes of scene are involved – from the rough terrain outside Thebes[12] to the walls of Thebes in 362, and from the walls of Thebes to the battlefield in 443.

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[7] *Herc. Fur.*, *Troad.*, *Med.*, *Phaedr.*, *Oedip.*, *Agam.*, *Thyest.*

[8] On the structure of *Oedip.*, which appears on the surface to contain six acts, see Tarrant (1978), 219–20.

[9] In the other plays of Seneca the choral odes make the division into acts clear; in *Phoen.*, since there are no choral lyrics, other criteria have to be applied. A Senecan act is an episode, a phase of the dramatic action, which takes place continuously in a particular place. If the setting changes, one can assume that a different act has begun; thus 363 and 443 each herald the start of a new episode. There does not appear to be a change of location after 319 (see n. 12 below), nor is there an exit line which would signify the end of the act (as in Sen. *Troad.* 812–13; *Phaedr.* 83–4, 718; *Med.* 299–300, 577–8, 847–8; *Oedip.* 401–2, 707–8, 880; *Agam.* 308–9, 802–7). However, there are other reasons for believing that a new act begins at 320: the main issue of 1–319 is Oedipus' suicide; his agreeing to live in 319 completes Seneca's treatment of this theme, and 320 heralds the dominance of the second major theme of the play – the fraternal struggle; the disappearance of Antigone from the scene at 319 and the arrival of the Nuntius (see on 320–62 for the allocation of 320–7 and 347–9) suggests the beginning of a new episode, as does the concluding and climactic character of Oedipus' words in 314–19.

[10] Tarrant (1978), 229, who argues that *Phoen.* is not incomplete, divides the work into five scenes: 1–319, 320–362, 363–402, 403–442, 443–664. However, there seems to be no reason to discern a scene-change at 402 other than the desire to make the structure of the work conform to that of the other tragedies. Mesk, 290, while admitting the possibility of a fourth act beginning at 443, divides the work into three acts only: 1–319, 320–62, 363–664.

[11] Hirschberg, 2–4, believes that the 'Fluchszene' (320–62) is too short to constitute a separate act and that it, like 363–442, is a scene within an act: thus he distinguishes only two acts (1–362 and 363–664), each containing two scenes (1–319, 320–362 and 363–442, 443–664).

[12] Zwierlein (OCT) identifies the setting of 1–362 as *prope Thebas in uia.* There is, in fact, very little evidence on which to make a decision about the location of the first section of the play: Antigone and Oedipus could be on Cithaeron, although

Unity

The structural peculiarities and the state of incompletion of *Phoen.* have for centuries prompted questions about the nature of the work. D. Heinsius, in the seventeenth century, was the first to doubt both the unity of *Phoen.* and its dramatic nature[13] and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the issue of whether the two fragments of *Phoen.* belong to one play or two was hotly debated. The proponents of the view that the fragments are remnants of, or sketches for, two separate plays[14] discerned the kernel of one drama influenced by Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* concerning the vicissitudes of the exiled Oedipus (1–362), and of another, based on Euripides' *Phoenissae*, about the conflict between Eteocles and Polyneices (363–664). The most convincing arguments of the unitarians, on the other hand, are that the two sections are linked by the theme of the approaching conflict and by the curse, the second section being a fulfilment of the first,[15] and – the view of Mesk – that there exists a parallelism of design between the two sections which cannot be incidental. The main character in the first part is Oedipus, in the second, Jocasta. Both are asked to mediate by two people; the request is rejected by Oedipus since he is convinced of the uselessness of intervention because of his sons' lack of filial piety (295–302), it is complied with by Jocasta since she believes that her intervention may succeed because of her sons' filial piety (408–14). Jocasta wishes to prevent the *nefas* of the fraternal conflict, Oedipus longs for it (328–47, 350–8).[16] Mesk observes, further, that there are echoes of thought and word which cannot be explained simply by the fact that the material for both parts is taken from the same legend and that Seneca tends to be repetitive. The

there is no compelling reason to believe that this is the case; they could be *in uia*, if by *uia* one means simply a footpath or rough track (it is difficult in terms of the atmosphere of the scene to imagine them being on the busy main road to Athens, although the problem of the chorus would be made easier with such a setting); they could simply be in a wild countryside outside Thebes. All that can be said for certain is that the surrounding terrain is rough and dangerous (67–72) and that Cithaeron is reasonably nearby (5–6, 12–13, 27–37).

[13] *Quare cum tragoediam unam non posset . . . duas nobis declamationes dedit* in Scriverius, 302; Leo, *Obs. Crit.*, 77–82, likewise held that the fragments of *Phoen.* were composed as declamatory material.

[14] The most notable being: Schmidt, 76; G. Richter, *De Seneca tragoediarum auctore commentatio philologica* (Diss. Bonn, 1862), 21–7; Peiper, 38; P. Habrucker, *Quaestiones Anneanea* (Regimenti, 1873), 22ff.

[15] So Birt (1911), 361; Lindskog, 70–1.

[16] Mesk, 299.

most compelling of those which he cites are the myth of Agaue, referred to by both Oedipus and Jocasta (15–18, 363–5), albeit in different contexts,[17] and Oedipus' words *ibo, ibo* (12), which are echoed in 407 by Jocasta.

Mesk was thinking along the right lines, although he could have gone much further. A close examination of the two sections of *Phoen.* reveals an underlying network of shared motifs, recurrent thought patterns, and verbal echoes which give it an internal cohesion. The theme of the tangled relationships in the royal house of Thebes is sustained throughout *Phoen.* by the complete avoidance of proper names in direct address (a feature unique to *Phoen.*) and the abundance of terms which denote consanguinity: despite the brevity of *Phoen.*, the total number of words denoting family relationships is greater than in any other genuine Senecan drama.[18] The word *manus* is a unifying word-motif in *Phoen.*:[19] it occurs twenty-five times and in seventeen cases it is associated with violence, in particular, that of Oedipus towards his parents and himself and of the brothers towards each other. Its repeated use in both sections helps to draw together the two strands of the legendary material by highlighting the theme of violence common to both (countered by restraint exercised by Antigone in the first section and by Jocasta in the second).

As Mesk observed, the figure of Oedipus dominates the first part of the play while that of Jocasta dominates the second. The play is unlike Euripides' *Phoenissae* in that it is not primarily about the fraternal conflict; rather it is concerned with the respective reactions of Oedipus and Jocasta to it.[20] This interpretation is supported by the clear division into two parts, the attempt to create contrasts and parallels between them, the concentration on the emotions of Oedipus and Jocasta, the lack of specific detail about the nature of the brothers' agreement, the failure to present the respective claims and grievances of the brothers (as Euripides does), the fact that Eteocles and Polyneices never address each other directly apart perhaps from Eteocles' exiling of Polyneices in 652–3.[21] If *Phoen.* is seen as a drama about Oedipus and Jocasta, a drama of comparison and contrast, the

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[17] Nevertheless, both envy Agaue's crime; see on 363.

[18] See further on *nata* 2 and see Appendix for statistics.

[19] See on *manus* 51 for precise references.

[20] See Opelt, 285: 'Die *Phoenissen* aber sind letzlich die Tragödie der Elternliebe: Der Vater Oedipus . . . die Mutter Iocasta . . . setzen in beiden Teilen die scharfen Akzente, schaffen den Rahmen zur Tragödie des Brudermordes.'

[21] See commentary for a discussion of the allocation of 651–64.

structure appears as less of a problem. The length of the acts remains uneven, the opening is still unusual, and the drama incomplete, but the sharp distinction into two parts is explicable as reflecting Seneca's dramatic purpose: it emphasises the opposite reactions of father and mother to their sons' strife and it suggests the gulf, emotional as well as physical, that has grown between them since Oedipus' discovery of his true identity.

In terms of the parallelism of design between the two sections of the play the question of guilt is an important feature. Throughout the first act (1–319), Oedipus is obsessed with his own guilt and pollution, and Antigone fails in her attempt to convince him that he is innocent because his crimes were committed in ignorance (204–25). He acknowledges his legal innocence[22] but nevertheless feels morally polluted by his *scelera*. Jocasta is also guilt-ridden and her piling up of guilt in 367–9 is parallel to that of Oedipus' in 270–6, although she also is technically *innocens* because she was unaware of Oedipus' identity when she married him. Oedipus' sense of guilt prompts him not to condemn or to wish to resolve the conflict between Eteocles and Polyneices, but perversely to revel in it and to express the wish that his offspring may outdo him in sinning.[23] Jocasta, like Oedipus, sees the wickedness of the brothers as the result of their tainted origins,[24] but her feelings of guilt make her want to save the situation by averting the impious war. Both parents regard as their own greatest crime the involvement of their children in the family *nefas*.[25]

The portrayal of the opposite reactions of Oedipus and Jocasta to the strife of their sons is supported by verbal echoes of the first section in the second. *Ibo, ibo* has already been mentioned.[26] Jocasta's words, *in me ruat/ iuuentus* (443–4) and *fratresque . . . in se ruentes* (549–50), recall Oedipus' savage exhortation *frater in fratrem ruat* (355). Her horror at the brothers' *maius nefas/ quam quod miser uidere non potuit pater* (531–2) contrasts with Oedipus' desire for *maiusque quam quod casus et iuuenum furor/ conatur aliquid* (353–4). In 450, Jocasta's plea to her sons, *dexteras matri date*, contrasts with Oedipus' injunction, *date arma matri*

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[22] 218 *et dira fugio scelera quae feci innocens*; see commentary *ad loc.* on the textual problem.

[23] Cf. 331ff., especially 335–6 *gloriam ac laudes meas/ superate* and 353–4 *maiusque quam quod casus et iuuenum furor/ conatur aliquid cupio.*

[24] In 335–6 Oedipus says *facietis* [i.e. some crime worse than Oedipus' own] *scio:/ sic estis orti* and in 369 Jocasta says *peperi nocentes.*

[25] Cf. 272–6 and 369.

[26] See Intro., 4.

(358).[27] Both Oedipus and Jocasta dismiss as *leue* crimes that would normally be considered heinous (270 and 367–8). In addition, *eruo*, which is strongly associated with Oedipus' gouging out of his eyes (179; cf. also 229), is used by Jocasta in her entreaty to Polyneices not to destroy Thebes (555–6). Oedipus' self-mutilation and Polyneices' impending attack on Thebes are thus drawn together as manifestations of the impulse to destruction to which the descendants of Laius are wedded.

The mutual inability of Oedipus and his sons to control their lives is implicit in the language used of them. In Stoic terms, passion and not reason governs their actions and dictates their responses: Oedipus' *ira* is proclaimed in virtually every word he utters and it is referred to specifically at 163, 186, 205, 347–8, 350; Eteocles and Polyneices are driven by *ira* (299), they are said to be *grauiter furentes* (290) and *feruidos* (411). Father and sons are linked by the *ira* and *furor* which motivates their respective destructive urges.

An obvious connection between the two sections of *Phoen.* is the figure of Antigone, who appears both in the scenes with Oedipus in the countryside outside Thebes (1–362) and on the battlements at Thebes (363–442). In the former, her role is to restrain her father,[28] in the latter, it is to urge on her mother. Her presence in Thebes has worried some critics since in 51–66 Antigone insists that she will never leave her father. Antigone's 'abandonment' of Oedipus can, however, easily be justified: because he has refused to intervene in the conflict of the brothers and has insisted that he will remain in the woods outside Thebes safely hidden in a cave, Antigone feels that she must return to Thebes to help to resolve the situation.[29] Seneca does not state this explicitly and to expect him to have done so would be dramatic pedantry.

The strongest link between the two sections is the motif of the fraternal conflict, and it is Seneca's treatment of this theme which,

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[27] So Fantham (1983), 65. See on 358 for the problems of text and sense involved in these words.

[28] Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 102, describes Antigone as 'an *exemplum* of Virtue, set off against the faulty attitudes of her father and the criminal passions of her brothers', a view which idealises Antigone somewhat, since her behaviour is un-Stoic in certain respects.

[29] So Braun, 278. It is not necessary to assume, as do Pratt (*Dramatic Suspense*, 65 n.128) and Birt (1911), 364, that there is a passage missing from the text in which it was agreed that Antigone should return to Thebes; nor need one believe with Cima, 255–9, that Antigone's presence in Thebes is the result of careless composition by Seneca.

more than anything else, lends support to the unitarian view of *Phoen.* There is in the first section of *Phoen.* what Pratt describes as 'a crescendo of reference' to the power struggle between Eteocles and Polyneices,[30] which prepares for, and leads into, the second part of the play (363–664) in which we are thrust into the midst of the conflict itself. It is this 'crescendo of reference', culminating in Oedipus' cry, *frater in fratrem ruat* (355), which provides the undercurrent of dramatic movement and carries us beyond the point of Oedipus' refusal to mediate to the battlements of Thebes and thence to the battlefield.

In his dissertation on *Phoen.*, Adolf Paul, 94, concludes that each of the two sections of *Phoen.* was originally intended as the beginning of a separate play (hence the presence of Antigone in both (64)), and that the Jocasta-part, an example of *Handlungsdrama*, was composed before the Oedipus-part, an example of *Affektdrama* (59, 74). Paul recognises that 320–62 serve as a prologue to the Jocasta-part (58, 94) and that the mention of Jocasta in 358 ushers in the scene which begins the second part of the play. He believes that, as an experiment, Seneca decided to put the two beginnings together, using 320–62 as a bridging scene, to form a single play (95). This theory, like that of Heinsius and Leo, ignores not only the verbal echoes and parallelism of design in the two parts, but also the fact that the theme of the fraternal conflict is not merely common to both sections but intensifies during the first section, even during the first act (1–319), in preparation for its dominance in the second.

One might note at this point that there is no incompatibility between the two sections of *Phoen.* in terms of the legend. Although in Sen. *Oedip.* Jocasta commits suicide as she does in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, in both parts of *Phoen.* Seneca appears to have followed Euripides, in whose *Phoenissae* Jocasta is alive in Thebes after Oedipus' self-blinding and voluntary abdication.[31] Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 75) concluded from 552–3 (*nam pater debet sibi/ quod ista* [i.e. Polyneices leading an army against Thebes] *non spectauit*) and 622–4 (*uade et id bellum gere/ in quo pater materque pugnanti tibi/ fauere possint*) that Oedipus is present in Thebes in the second fragment, as he is in Euripides' *Phoenissae* at the time of the battle between Eteocles and Polyneices. However, neither passage cited by Leo suggests more than that

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[30] *Dramatic Suspense*, 65. See commentary on 53–8, 108–10, 273–306.

[31] Oedipus' words in 358, *data arma matri*, indicate that Jocasta is thought of as being alive even in the first part of the play.

Oedipus is still alive: *debet sibi* in 522 most plausibly refers either to Oedipus' voluntary exile or to his self-inflicted blindness, or to both.[32]

Ismene does not appear in Sen. *Phoen.* and the only possible reference to her occurs at 551 (*utraque . . . soror*).[33] Her omission from the play has prompted the suggestion that it is in fact Ismene who is in Thebes with Jocasta, while Antigone, true to her word, remains in the woods with Oedipus.[34] *E* nowhere acknowledges Antigone's presence in Thebes,[35] but, according to *A*, it is she who speaks at 403 and 414b to urge her mother to hasten down to the battlefield before the opposing armies clash. Such MS evidence as there is thus points to Antigone and not Ismene as being at Jocasta's side. It is noteworthy, too, that Euripides does not include Ismene in his *Phoenissae*, probably because her character in tragedy, at least as far as we can tell from extant plays, is not a very forceful one. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* it is she who remains in Thebes, while Antigone shares the rigours of her father's exile. Although her role in the latter play may seem to be an argument in favour of her presence in Thebes in Sen. *Phoen.*, it is difficult to think of her speaking the line *aut solue bellum, mater, aut prima excipe* (406). Furthermore, although her inclusion would extend the parallelism between the two parts of the play, it would destroy the sole link between them in terms of *dramatis personae.*

Chorus

Tarrant, who suggests that *Phoen.* as we have it is a completed play, sees it as 'an essay in a distinct sub-genre of tragedy', like Ezekiel's *Exagoge*, the fragmentary Hellenistic tragedy. He observes that *Exagoge* and *Phoen.* illustrate 'the extent to which "dissolution of the dramatic structure" might proceed once the post-classical tragic theater abandoned the unifying chorus of fifth-century drama' ((1978), 230).

There is little evidence to support this hypothesis. The apparent absence of the chorus in Ezekiel's play cannot be used to support the view that Seneca never composed, or intended to compose, choral lyrics for *Phoen.* In the first place, we cannot be certain that there was no chorus (or choruses) in *Exagoge.* There are no historical objections

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32 Birt (1879), 524; Moricca (1917), 497.

33 See *ad loc.*

34 So Herrmann, *Théâtre*, 427; Friedrich, 132.

35 Her name does not appear in the list of *dramatis personae* which precedes 363, and *E* fails to name the speaker at 403 and 414b.

to it, since at least some Hellenistic tragedies had choruses,[36] and it is possible to suggest two suitable choruses for the play – Raguel's daughters and the Egyptian wizards.[37] Furthermore, the fact that *Phoen.* is incomplete in other respects and that every other play in the Senecan corpus has a chorus, points to the likelihood that Seneca intended to include choral lyrics in *Phoen.* also. It is possible that Seneca actually composed choral odes, which, for some reason, were omitted from the archetype. It seems more likely, however, that Seneca left the composition of the choral lyrics until he had completed the narrative portion of the play, which he never did. In view of the isolation of the Senecan chorus from the action and the recurrence of stock themes in the choral odes, the composition of choral lyrics in this way is quite plausible.[38]

Speculation about the nature and composition of the hypothetical chorus in *Phoen.* is fraught with difficulties. In view of the scene-change from the rough terrain outside Thebes to Thebes itself, it seems that one must assume either a peripatetic chorus, or two choruses, as in Sen. *Agam.* In that play, the secondary chorus of Trojan women which accompanies Cassandra (589–781) behaves in accordance with Euripidean custom: it is closely associated with one particular character (Cassandra) and is involved only in one ode and in the scene which follows it.[39] One might, therefore, envisage a secondary chorus in *Phoen.* also, which would sing the first ode (after 319), and be closely associated with either Oedipus or Antigone. The scene would then switch to Thebes, with the principal chorus, consisting perhaps of Theban women or elders, singing the second (after 362) and subsequent odes. A problem with the notion of two choruses in *Phoen.* may be the composition of the secondary chorus, if, like the secondary chorus in *Agam.*, it would have been closely connected with either Antigone or Oedipus. On the other hand, Seneca's lack of concern about such details is evident in *Phaedr.*, where the chorus remains

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[36] Sifakis, *Hellenistic Drama*, 122.

[37] Howard Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge, 1983), 31–3. See also Sifakis, *Hellenistic Drama*, 122–3.

[38] It may account for the strange forgetfulness of the Chorus of *Thyest.*: in Act 4 the Messenger explains the darkness that has fallen as the result of Phoebus' horror at Thyestes' feast (776–88), yet in the ode that follows immediately, the Chorus has no idea of the reason for the darkness. Tarrant (*Sen. Thyest.*, 204) sees this disfunction as the product of 'a sound dramatic instinct', but it may in fact result from Seneca's method of composition.

[39] See Tarrant on *Agam.* 586ff. for references to the plays of Euripides.

unidentified throughout the play and even its gender is unknown. The notion of the *first* ode's being sung by a secondary chorus, however, is also troubling.

The idea of a peripatetic chorus, which would enhance the sense of unity of the drama, is more attractive. No precedent for such a chorus exists in Senecan tragedy, but in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* the chorus of Furies travels in pursuit of Orestes from Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi to Athens, and in Sophocles' *Ajax*, the scene changes from a setting in front of the hut of Ajax to a desolate spot on the sea shore, to which the chorus (divided into two semi-choruses) goes in search of Ajax.

Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 78) dismissed the possibility of there being a chorus in the region between Thebes and Cithaeron consisting of anyone *praeter satyros bacchasue Euripidias.* Certainly it is difficult to imagine what a chorus of Phoenician women (following the Euripidean play) would have been doing either on Cithaeron or on a path in the countryside nearby,[40] but one might envisage a group of Theban women being on or near the mountain for some religious purpose associated with the worship of Dionysus. The Senecan chorus does not usually react specifically to the content of the opening act[41] and this may be imagined to be the case with the opening song of the chorus in *Phoen.*: an ode which dealt with the violent and unhappy history of the house of Thebes, perhaps dwelling on the fate of Pentheus (appropriately for worshippers of Dionysus), would fit in well at this point, particularly since Oedipus has touched on it in his first speech (15–18).

The chorus would sing the first ode after 319 and it would be present during the short second act (320–62); having sung the second ode after 362, which might have had as its theme the present danger threatening the city, the chorus, together with the Nuntius and Antigone, would set off for Thebes, leaving Oedipus hiding in his cave (359–60). The Theban women would then reappear at 363 and would sing the third ode at 442[42] and the fourth at 665.

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[40] Herrmann, *Théâtre*, 149–50, suggests, moreover, that such a chorus would have been unacceptable to a Roman audience, who would not, like fifth-century Athenians, have been aware of the legendary connection between Thebes and Phoenicia. On the setting of the first act, see Intro., 2–3 n. 12.

[41] This occurs only in *Troad.*

[42] Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 34, argues not very convincingly that Seneca did not intend there to be a pause for a choral ode after 442 since the speech of the Satelles (427–42) plunges us immediately into the next scene.

The Ending of the Play

Tarrant's view of *Phoen.* as a complete play is questionable. It seems to owe much to the fact that he discerns five and not four acts in the extant text. He acknowledges that the dramatic situation is left unresolved, but describes this as being 'characteristically Senecan' and compares the final acts of *Med.*, *Agam.*, and *Thyest.* ((1978), 229–30 with n.88). However, none of these three plays is inconclusive in the same way: in *Med.*, we lack only an indication of where Medea, her crimes accomplished, is to find refuge since there is no kindly Aegeus in Seneca's play to offer her asylum; *Thyest.* and *Agam.* are unresolved only in that each ends with an ominous declaration that violence within the family has not yet run its course. In all three, the dramatic situation is fully played out. In *Phoen.*, however, the main issue – who will rule Thebes – is not decided, as the play breaks off abruptly with Eteocles' assertion in 664: *Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene.*

Paul, 68, somewhat eccentrically, gives 653 to Polyneices; thus, according to him, Polyneices resigns his claim to the throne and there is no need for Seneca to continue further. Paul draws a contrast between Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Sen. *Phoen.*, claiming that the conflict in the former about *who* will wield power is transformed in the latter into an argument about *how* power is best to be wielded – in other words, the military struggle becomes, in Seneca's version, a battle of words which culminates in Polyneices' capitulation, after which Seneca loses interest in the play. Moricca ((1917), 484–93) also holds that *Phoen.* ends with Polyneices' capitulation and his second exile. The inspiration for this revolutionary approach came, believes Moricca, from Livy's account in 2.39–40 of how Veturia, Coriolanus' mother, persuaded her son not to attack Rome, his own city. There is, he claims, not simply a general similarity of situation, but 'una corrispondenza esatta . . . nelle singole frasi'. However, the examples he gives do not reveal striking verbal borrowings by Seneca, and even if they did, it would not imply that Seneca had followed Livy to the extent of departing radically from the traditional form of the legend. Friedrich, 123–4, like Paul, explains the absence of an ending to the play as the result of Seneca's lack of interest; he, however, acknowledges that the mutual murder of the brothers and the suicide of the mother must have been part of Seneca's dramatic intention at the outset.

It seems pointless to speculate about Seneca's reasons for not writing the final act of *Phoen.*, particularly since it is possible that he did

in fact compose onc which has been lost in transmission (although this is less than likely in view of the missing choral lyrics, whose wholesale absence cannot so easily be explained in this way).[43] It seems certain that Seneca did intend there to be a final act dealing with the expected battle and the three deaths. Any other ending would be an extraordinarily bold departure from the traditional form of the legend, and such a departure is not evidenced elsewhere in Senecan drama. Also, the intensification of the theme of the impending battle demands, in dramatic terms, that it actually occur.[44] Opelt, 284, suggests that, after a choral ode, perhaps about the power of fate, the play might have ended with an act consisting of a messenger speech (cf. Euripides' *Phoenissae* 1356–1424, 1427–79 and Sen. *Troad.*), describing the battle and announcing the deaths of Eteocles, Polyneices, and Jocasta, a speech addressed possibly to Oedipus in the woods. This would tie in with Oedipus' declaration at 367–8: *hinc aucupabor uerba rumoris uagi/ et saeua fratrum bella, quod possum, audiam* and would unite the two strands of the play. Alternatively, there could have been a speech by Oedipus himself in the woods, in which he lamented the tragic outcome of the battle and, possibly, reverted to his intention to die. Both these conjectures would, of course, involve yet another change of scene.

Prologue

Tarrant ((1978), 230) observes that although the addition of choral lyrics and a final scene would bring *Phoen.* up to the length of an average Senecan drama, 'it would not affect the unconventional structure of its episodes'. By this, Tarrant would seem to be referring to the lack of conventional dramatic connections between the two halves of the play, the uneven length of the scenes, and the absence of a true prologue.

The apparent lack of connection between the two halves of *Phoen.* has already been dealt with. With regard to the uneven length of the scenes, it is true that no other play of Seneca reveals such extremes of short and long scenes. It should be noted, however, that, leaving

[43] See Hirschberg, *Sen. Phoen.*, 7–8 '. . . dass just nur die zwei Akte dank eines Exzerptors überliefert worden sein sollten, ist sehr unwahrscheinlich, dass das Stück aber auf mechanischem Wege zufällig so kunstgerecht sollte verstümmelt worden sein, ist geradzu ausgeschlossen. Plausibler ist die Erklärung, dass der Dichter die Tragödie nicht fertiggestellt hat'.

[44] See Pratt, *Dramatic Suspense*, 66.

aside the missing fifth act, the remaining four – 1–319 (319 lines), 320–62 (43 lines), 363–442 (80 lines), 443–664 (222 lines) – fall into a clear pattern, with the two main acts enclosing the two short transitional acts, which are necessary for the furtherance of the action.

More troublesome is the absence of a prologue, concerning which scholarly views differ. Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 76–7) held that one of the reasons that *Phoen.* could not be regarded as a tragic drama but must be a collection of declamatory pieces was that there is no statement of locality in the first act, as there is in Seneca's other plays. Nor, one might add, are the characters with whom the play opens identified by name. However, Hippolytus does not introduce himself in the prologue to *Phaedr.*, nor does Oedipus at the beginning of *Oedip.* In these dramas, however, as in *Phoen.*, the circumstantial evidence would have made it clear to the audience who the characters were.[45] A blind father, who has committed some dreadful crime (3–10), who calls Cithaeron *meus* (13), and who is accompanied and guided only by his daughter (102) must have been easily identifiable as Oedipus. Similarly, the general location would have been clear: in the vicinity of Cithaeron, in rough countryside.[46]

Birt ((1911), 363–4), responding to Leo's concern about the lack of an explicit statement of location, maintained that Seneca intended there to be a prologue (followed by a choral ode) preceding Oedipus' appearance with Antigone, and that this would have been set in Thebes and would have featured the Ghost of Laius commanding Oedipus to leave the city. This is a rather drastic way of dealing with an imprecise statement of location which is parallelled in *Phaedr.* Birt's theory demands a change of scene after the prologue, and since he believes that the final act of the play is also missing, it necessitates his squeezing the extant verses into only three acts: 1–362, 363–442, 443–664.

Moricca ((1917), 508–9) believes 1–50 to constitute the prologue, with the first choral ode being delayed until after 319. To the imagined objection that in Senecan drama a choral ode follows the prologue directly, he responds, correctly, that this is true of some Senecan dramas, but not of *Phaedr.* and *Oedip.* (one might add also *Troad.*). In

[45] Pratt, *Dramatic Suspense*, 112, observes: '. . . the presumption of background seems clearly to indicate composition for a cultured audience, such a gathering as attended the declamations of the period . . .'; see also commentary on 243–62 and 280–2.

[46] The setting of the prologue to *Phaedr.* is no more clearly stated: 2–5 indicate only that the drama will take place in or near Athens. On the setting of 1–362 of *Phoen.*, see Intro., 2–3 n. 12.

Phaedr., after the prologue sung by Hippolytus in anapaests, Phaedra and the Nurse, in a sort of extension of the prologue, join in a dialogue; the first choral ode thus does not occur until 274.[47] The prologues of *Troad.* and *Oedip.* confirm that Seneca was not wedded to one single scheme when it came to the prologue and the parodos.[48]

Pratt's analysis in *Dramatic Suspense* reveals that Seneca's procedure is to provide in the prologue hints, or sometimes clear indications, of the subsequent action of the plays. This is more easily accomplished in those plays in which the prologue is spoken by a superhuman protatic character (viz. *Herc. Fur.*, *Agam.*, *Thyest.*) than in those in which the prologue is spoken by a human character (viz. *Med.*, *Phaedr.*, *Troad.*, *Oedip.*), who cannot seem to have unnatural prescience of the action in which he/she is to participate, but who nevertheless contrives to foreshadow the dénouement of the drama.[49] Such foreshadowing is present also in the opening scene of *Phoen.*, in which the attack on Thebes and the mutual murder of the brothers, with which the play must have been intended to end,[50] are alluded to in 53–8, 108–10, and 273–306. However, to regard, as Moricca does, 1–50 only as constituting the prologue is difficult to justify: Oedipus' opening speech leads straight into Antigone's response, and although it creates, through the *affectus* of Oedipus, an awareness of some great disaster, there is no reference to the impending battle until 53–8. Thus, 1–319 as a whole should be seen as the opening scene – admittedly a long one, but in *Phaedr.* the first choral ode does not occur until 274, which makes its opening scene comparably extended. Moreover, in neither *Phoen.* nor *Phaedr.* is the opening scene strictly or exclusively a prologue since it is also part of the development of the action: in *Phoen.*, Oedipus' decision to live makes possible the approach of the Nuntius in the following act; in *Phaedr.*, the Nurse resolves in 268–73 to approach Hippolytus.

Of Senecan prologues, Herington, 449–50, says: 'We see a solitary, over-life-size figure brooding on the stage. Neither its physical not its intellectual lineaments become clear to the audience in the course of

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[47] See Coffey and Mayer, 88–9.

[48] In *Troad.*, the prologue spoken by Hecuba leads straight into the first choral ode (132–63), which is shared between Hecuba and the chorus, with Hecuba directing the chorus' lamentations. In *Oedip.*, the prologue is spoken by Oedipus, but the parodos does not follow immediately. Rather, Jocasta enters and speaks to her husband (81–6) and Oedipus responds (87–109); only at 110 does the parodos begin.

[49] See *Dramatic Suspense*, 56–63 (on *Troad.*), 66–80 (on *Med.*), 80–90 (on *Phaedr.*), 91–104 (on *Oedip.*).

[50] See Intro., 11–12.

its opening speech. Instead, that speech creates an aura of evil around it; either the soul (and, of course, the landscape) is clouded with the terror of past wickedness, or passion is gathering, threatening wickedness in the future'. The figure of Oedipus in the opening scene of *Phoen.* is certainly larger than life in its extreme self-hatred and torment, and although, strictly speaking, it is not solitary, because of Antigone's presence, Oedipus' total self-absorption gives his utterances the character of monologues. Certainly 1–319 are heavy both with the unresolved guilt of the past and with the impending *nefas* of the coming battle: the *affectus* of Oedipus is rooted in his past crimes, but is stimulated by the foreboding of his sons' impious conflict.[51]

The opening scene of *Phoen.*, then, contains elements commonly found in Senecan prologues, but it is considerably longer than the other prologues (with the exception of *Phaedr.*),[52] and it develops the action rather than simply introducing it. Despite this, and the fact that neither the identity of the characters nor the exact nature of the location are explicitly stated, it is difficult to imagine a prologue preceding a scene that is so filled with the kind of dramatic suspense associated with Senecan prologues. Furthermore, unless one were then to imagine 363–664 as constituting a single act (surely impossible in view of the unique scene-change at 442), there would be six acts in *Phoen.* rather than five. It seems best, therefore, to regard 1–319 not as a prologue but as the opening scene of *Phoen.* which both introduces and develops the action.

In the introduction to his commentary on Sen. *Phoen.*, Hirschberg, 6–7, contends that 1–319 is the first scene of the second act of the play. He holds that it is too long for an opening scene and that having the first twelve verses addressed to Antigone is unorthodox. Most importantly, it exhibits the hallmark of second acts in Senecan drama in that it depicts a secondary character attempting in vain to deter the main character from his/her passionate or evil purpose by rational argument.[53] Superficially, this seems to be the case, but in fact *Phoen.* does not fit comfortably into this pattern. Seneca's main purpose in 1–319 is, as Hirschberg recognises, to portray Antigone's

[51] We can deduce from the extreme emotional anguish of Oedipus in 1–50 that something more than the memory of his past crimes is disturbing him, but what this is, is not fully revealed until 274–87.

[52] The length of the prologue of each of the plays is as follows: *Herc. Fur.* 124 lines, *Troad.* 66 lines, *Med.* 55 lines, *Oedip.* 109 lines, *Agam.* 56 lines, *Thyest.* 175 lines.

[53] On this, see K. Anliker, *Prologue und Akteinteilung in der Tragödien Senecas* (Diss. Bern, 1960), 52; Herington, 453–4.

dissuasion of Oedipus from suicide by reasoning with him and in this respect it resembles several second acts.[54] However, unlike the secondary characters in the other plays Antigone does not plead in vain, for Oedipus does indeed renounce his aim of seeking death, and reason does defeat passion. Herington sees a Senecan tragedy as falling into three movements: the cloud of evil (= prologue), the defeat of reason by passion, the explosion of evil. If one compares *Phoen.* with Herington's 'recipe', it seems that 1–319 could well be the first movement, with the second encompassing 320–664 (showing the triumph both of Oedipus' *furor* and that of the brothers). The third movement is missing, but would comprise the account of the death of the brothers and Jocasta's suicide.

Conclusion

Most of the structural difficulties of *Phoen.*, taken singly, can be explained away. However, even leaving aside its fragmentary state, the sum of its peculiarities makes it unique among Seneca's tragedies. Seneca has united two tragic themes in a single drama – Oedipus in exile and the strife of Eteocles and Polyneices. This suggests that the play should be regarded as an experiment in the manipulation of the traditional legendary material, an experiment which Seneca perhaps abandoned when the technical difficulties became clear.

3. Seneca's Treatment of the Theban Legend

Seneca and His Dramatic Precursors

Since the appearance of R.J. Tarrant's important article[55] on the literary context of, and influences on, Senecan drama, it can no longer be assumed that each of Seneca's plays was directly based on an extant or lost play of the classical Greek tragedians. That Seneca possessed a wide and intimate knowledge of Attic drama is not borne out by his quotation of, or references to, Greek tragedy in his prose works: these consist almost exclusively of well-known *sententiae* (by contrast, quotations from Vergil and Ovid are abundant and wide-ranging). Nor is it suggested by what we know to have been normal

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[54] These Herington identifies in *Phaedr.*, *Med.*, *Agam.*, *Thyest.*, *Troad.*

[55] 'Senecan Drama and its Antecedents' *HSCPh* 82 (1978), 213–63.

for an educated Roman of the first century AD.[56] Rather, Tarrant argues that, in terms of dramatic technique, Senecan drama was greatly influenced by developments which occurred after Euripides' time, and that, with regard to plot and characterisation, Seneca relied heavily upon Augustan drama. Since, however, no Augustan drama has survived, and none on the theme of *Phoen.* is known ever to have existed, it may still be useful to consider the relationship of the Senecan play to relevant classical Greek dramas.

Seneca and Sophocles

The most common view of Sen. *Phoen.* has been that it is based in part (1–362) on Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* and in part on Euripides' *Phoenissae* (363–664).[57] It has also been claimed that the whole play is modelled on Euripides' *Phoenissae*,[58] and, conversely, that it was influenced by Aeschylus' *Septem* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* as well as the *Coloneus* and Euripides' *Phoenissae*.[59] Superficially, the first two acts of *Phoen.* do seem to be based on the *Oedipus Coloneus*: both plays open with the blind Oedipus being led by Antigone, in both plays Oedipus' intervention in the fraternal struggle is sought and in both it is rejected, in both there is an official request for Oedipus to return to Thebes. Yet, when one subjects these overt similarities to close examination, they appear less striking.

At the beginning of the Sophoclean drama, Oedipus and Antigone

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[56] For Seneca quoting Greek tragedy, see: *Ep.* 49.12, where the tag *Veritatis simplex oratio est* is attributed vaguely to *ille tragicus* (i.e. Euripides; it occurs in *Ph.* 469 ἁπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔφυ); *Ep.* 115–14, where twelve lines from Euripides about money are quoted in Latin (see *Adesp.* frg. 181 in *TrGF* vol. 2 for the first of these; also *Euripides* 324, where Nauck[2] suggests that Seneca made a mistake about the play from which the verses come); *Apocol.* 4.2 where the verse from E. *Cres.* χαίροντας, εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων (frg. 449 N[2]) is cited in Greek. In *QN.* 4.2.16, he declares that Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides shared the opinion that the rising of the Nile in summer was due to snow melting on the mountains of Ethiopia; this belief was, in fact, apparently found in each of the tragedians (cf. *Aesch.* frg. 300 in *TrGF* vol. 3, *Supp.* 559–61; S. *frg.* 882 in *TrGF* vol. 4; E. *Hel.* 1–3) but Seneca could easily have discovered it indirectly.

See also H.D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (Cambridge, 1967), 54–5, and Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 9–10; but contrast C.D.N. Costa, 'The Tragedies' in *Seneca* ed. C.D.N. Costa (London and Boston, 1974), 109, who says that Seneca 'was steeped in Greek drama'.

[57] See Leo, *Obs. Crit.*, 77; Friedrich, 133; William M. Calder III, 'Seneca: Tragedian of Imperial Rome' *CJ* 72 (1976), 1–11 at 6; Joachim Dingel, 'Senecas Tragödien: Vorbilder und poetische Aspekte' *ANRW* 2.32.2, 1052–99 at 1076.

[58] See Braun, 271–87; Cima, 255–8.

[59] See Moricca (1918), 1–40.

are on the road to Athens and have reached Colonus, where they are joined by the Stranger (36) who tells them where they are and goes to summon the elders of Colonus (30). The setting in which Oedipus and Antigone are depicted is thus very different from the rugged countryside outside Thebes where Oedipus and Antigone are wandering in Sen. *Phoen.* Moreover, the isolation of father and daughter is of short duration in the Attic drama, whereas in the Senecan play they are alone for 319 lines. In addition, in the opening episode of the Sophoclean play, Oedipus' state of mind is one of quiet resignation (3–8), since he does not yet know of the conflict between his sons; in Sen. *Phoen.*, on the other hand, we are plunged into the midst of his desire for death, a desire reawakened by his sons' quarrel. The nature of Oedipus' exile, too, is very different in the two plays: in the Greek drama we learn that Oedipus was banished from Thebes some time after the discovery of his identity, and that his sons did nothing to prevent his being exiled but, once he was gone, began fighting over the throne, which Creon had held as regent;[60] in the Roman play, Oedipus' exile is self-imposed (104) and is prompted by the outbreak of the strife between the brothers (304–6). The brothers' agreement to rule alternately in Sen. *Phoen.*[61] has no counterpart in Sophocles' play, in which Polyneices, as the older brother, is said to have claimed the throne as his birthright (1292–3).

Oedipus' intervention in the struggle between Eteocles and Polyneices is sought in both plays and in both he refuses to involve himself. However, the circumstances under which the appeal is made and the nature of it are vastly different in the two dramas: in Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, it is Polyneices who requests Oedipus' involvement, not to mediate, but to give his blessing to Polyneices' cause, since, according to the oracle, victory will fall to the side with which Oedipus allies himself (1331–2). In Seneca's play, the appeal has a different character, since it is delivered by a messenger on behalf of the city of Thebes (320–1) and Oedipus is asked to step in to prevent the war (327). There is an official appeal in the Sophoclean play also, issued by Creon, who asks Oedipus to return to the neighbourhood of Thebes (740–7), but this is not related to the power struggle between the brothers: the Thebans have been told that if Oedipus' grave

[60] 427–30, 367–73, but contrast 1354–7 where Oedipus blames Polyneices alone for his exile, which suggests that Polyneices was already king when Oedipus was banished; on the inconsistency, see H.D.F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy* (London, 3rd edn. 1961), 390.

[61] This can be inferred from 280, 378.

should be desecrated, they will suffer for it (402), thus they wish Oedipus to die near to Thebes so that they can protect his grave. This is a theme which is absent from Sen. *Phoen.*

When one examines closely the apparent correspondences between Sen. *Phoen.* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, they do not amount to much. The personality of Antigone, who in both plays appears as a loving, loyal, and courageous daughter, provides, in fact, the only substantial point of contact. In both the Greek and the Roman drama, Oedipus yields before Antigone's persuasiveness: in the former she cajoles her father into seeing Polyneices (1181–1204), and in the latter she prevails upon him to abandon his resolve to commit suicide (306–19).

If the similarities between the two dramas are slight, the differences between them are considerable. The quasi-daemonic stature of Oedipus in the Sophoclean play is far removed from the Oedipus *furibundus* of Sen. *Phoen.* The character of the just Theseus, vital to the plot of the Greek drama, does not appear in the Roman play, from which, in addition, Ismene and Creon are missing and in which Polyneices appears only in the second half and does not confront Oedipus at all. The 'apotheosis' of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Coloneus* is not found in Sen. *Phoen.*, in which, on the contrary, Oedipus is persuaded to live. It is the 'apotheosis', the heroisation of Oedipus at the last, which is the *raison d'être* of the Attic drama. The dramatic purpose of the first part of Sen. *Phoen.* – to show Oedipus' response to the conflict of his sons, against which Jocasta's reaction will be set in the second section – is very different. Moreover, the motivation for the curse of Oedipus on his sons in Sophocles' play is not imitated by Seneca: in the Greek drama, Oedipus curses his sons because they have neglected to protect and care for him (1375–9); in the Senecan play, the 'curse', modified to suit Seneca's purpose,[62] is prompted by Oedipus' twisted revelling in his own guilt and his perverse delight in his sons' wickedness (328–62).

Moricca ((1918), 17–21) collected passages from Sen. *Phoen.* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, which, he believed, reveal verbal echoes of the latter in the former. Only one of those he cites stands up to scrutiny: Sen. *Phoen.* 1 *Caeci parentis regimen et fessi unicum/ lateris leuamen, nata* is reminiscent of the opening verse of Sophocles' tragedy, τέκνον τυφλοῦ γέροντος 'Αντιγόνη. The verbal correspondence is unremarkable: the genitive *caeci*, echoing τυφλοῦ in the Greek play, is virtually

[62] See on 355.

a stock epithet of Oedipus. More striking is the fact that in each case an address to Antigone opens the play. Since, however, the similarity between the passages depends almost entirely upon position, it would be rash to claim, on the basis of this one instance, that Seneca had more than a general awareness of the contents of the *Oedipus Coloneus*.[63]

Seneca may never have read the *Coloneus*, but he seems to have known Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, since there are in Sen. *Phoen.* three passages where the influence of that play is suggested. In 31–8, Oedipus' feeling that he should have died on Cithaeron as an infant recalls *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1349–55 and 1391–3; the conundrum of Oedipus' family relationships in the Greek tragedy (1403–8) is echoed in the Roman (134–7); the desire of Oedipus to be deprived of the faculty of hearing in addition to that of sight (Sen. *Phoen.* 224–8) appears in 1386–90 of the Sophoclean play. It could be argued that the first two pairs of corresponding passages can be accounted for by the similarity of situation arising out of the common legendary material (with regard to the first passage, it is worth noting also that death wishes are common in Senecan drama in general: cf., e.g., *Herc. Fur.* 1202–18, 1310–13; *Troad.* 963–4; *Phaedr.* 680–4, 1159–63, 1201–12; *Oedip.* 868–75). The third example, however, cannot so easily be explained in this way, since Oedipus' wish to isolate himself further is not an essential part of the legend. However, that Seneca had a detailed knowledge of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is not borne out by a comparison of Sen. *Oedip.* with Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The former differs from the latter to such a marked degree that there is little justification for regarding the Greek play as a 'model' for the Latin.[64] The correspondence may be coincidental, bearing in mind the interest in mutilation and violence manifested in declamation, in Silver epic, and in Senecan drama in general.[65]

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63 See Wurnig, *Gefühlsdarstellungen*, 80–1, who notes that the verbal similarity only highlights the different line taken by Seneca: in S. *OC.*, Antigone is an indispensable help to her father; in Sen. *Phoen.*, Oedipus rejects her support (3–4).

64 Nevertheless, until about fifteen years ago scholars persisted in seeing Sen. *Oedip.* as based on the Sophoclean tragedy, partly, it would appear, under the influence of the old view of Seneca as an imitator and adaptor of Greek drama, partly because no other Greek or Latin version of an *Oedipus Tyrannus* has survived intact: so, e.g., R.C. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Oedipus Tyrannus* (Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1887), xxxiv–xxxvi; Herrmann, *Théâtre*, 295–305; Vessey, 73. Contrast more recently Henry & Walker, 'The Oedipus of Seneca', who declare of Sen. *Oedip.*: 'What Seneca makes of his plot, characterisation and theme, derives only in the merest externals from Greek dramatic tradition' and 'its unlikeness to the Greek play [i.e. S. *OT.*] often called Seneca's "model" is so extreme . . .' (128).

65 Cf., e.g. Sen. *Contr.* 1.7, 8.2, 9.4, *Suas.* 7.3; Luc. 2.94–129, 3.652–69, 7.617–30; Sen. *Phaedr.* 1085–1104, *Troad.* 1110–17.

Seneca and Euripides

Braun, 275–7, who believed that the whole of Sen. *Phoen.* was modelled on Euripides' *Phoenissae*, attempts to show the dependence of the first act of the former on the final episode of the latter, in which Antigone insists on sharing Oedipus' banishment and leads him into exile. There are, however, no notable linguistic similarities between the two plays at this point, and the general situation of the respective scenes is quite different. In the Greek play, Oedipus is compelled by Creon to leave Thebes and his immediate grief lies in his banishment, whereas in the Roman drama Oedipus is a voluntary exile and his anguish is caused by the realisation that the evil in his house has re-emerged in his sons.

The influence of Euripides on the second section of Sen. *Phoen.* (363–664) is evident. The Roman play nevertheless differs from its Greek predecessor in several important respects, apart from the fact that it does not deal with some of the themes of the Greek play at all (the Eteocles-Creon episode and the sacrifice of Menoeceus are notable omissions). In both dramas Jocasta is still alive.[66] Both deal with the battle between Eteocles and Polyneices, but the emphasis is different in each: in the Euripidean drama the focus is on the brothers and their claims (the ἀγών between them (469–525) is central to the episode), whereas in Sen. *Phoen.*, it is Jocasta's anxiety and maternal distress which is highlighted; she does most of the talking and the brothers never address each other (except perhaps for Eteocles' banishment of Polyneices in 652–3).[67]

In neither play is Oedipus involved in the attempt to halt the conflict, but for different reasons in each case: in the Senecan version, he not only refuses to intervene, but actually revels in the prospect of the battle and of the mutual slaughter of his sons; in Euripides, Oedipus' intervention is precluded by the fact that the conflict has arisen as a result of his curse (E. *Ph.* 67–8). In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, it is the curse which brings about the violence, in the Roman play it is the violence which evokes Oedipus' curse.[68]

The setting and timing of Jocasta's intervention is quite different in the two plays: in the Greek play, Polyneices' army is outside the walls of Thebes, but the battle is not yet about to begin and Polyneices

[66] This appears to be a Euripidean innovation, since in earlier treatments of the legend she kills herself when Oedipus' true identity is discovered. Contrast Sen. *Oedip.*, where Jocasta dies at the end of the play.

[67] See on 651–3 for the allocation of the final verses.

[68] On the transformation of the curse in Sen. *Phoen.*, see on 355.

comes into the city to meet his mother and brother; in Sen. *Phoen.*, the dramatic tension is heightened by having Jocasta rush to the battlefield to place herself between the opposing armies who are about to clash.

The τειχοσκοπία in Euripides' play (88–201) takes place on the roof of the royal palace (90), from where the Paidagogos points out to Antigone the individual warriors in Polyneices' army. Antigone is portrayed as being very young,[69] eager,[70] and naïve.[71] Her youthful uncertainty is revealed by her reluctance to appear in public at Jocasta's command (1274–6). The Antigone of Seneca who urges her mother to throw herself between the two armies, thereby either stopping the war or becoming its first victim (405–6), stands in contrast to the dewy maiden in Euripides' *Phoenissae*, who does, however, in the final episode necessarily assume a more commanding role as her father's guide (1539–40, 1710ff.).

The scene in Sen. *Phoen.* in which Jocasta, Antigone, and the Satelles take part (363–442), may have been influenced in part by the τειχοσκοπία in the Greek play. In Seneca's play we can only deduce the setting from the fact that it affords an excellent view of the battlefield and is close to it (it does not take Jocasta long to reach it); thus it probably takes place on the city walls rather than on the palace roof as in Euripides' play.[72] The persona of the Satelles, who appears to be a trusty family retainer,[73] may derive from that of the Paidagogos in the Greek play. However, he does not survey the hostile army in the detailed and systematic way characteristic of Euripides' τειχοσκοπία and of other such scenes (cf. Hom. *Il.* 3.161–242; Stat. *Theb.* 7.243–73).

In Aeschylus' *Septem*, the emphasis is on the shared fate of the brothers and on their mutual wrongdoing;[74] the respective claims of the brothers are not presented. In Euripides' *Phoenissae* it is otherwise.

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69 103 νέᾳ; 139, 193 τέκνον; 154 ὦ παῖ.

70 In 103 she clamours to be helped up to the roof and, once there, she asks many questions.

71 She prays that Artemis may destroy Parthenopaeus, one of the warriors in the Argive host (153), but expresses only affection for Polyneices (163ff.), the leader of the enemy army.

72 The possibility raised by Sutton, 15, that Antigone and Jocasta are in the woods is not convincing. If Jocasta were in the woods it would be because she had met, or tried to meet, with Oedipus, in a scene which we do not have. This seems unlikely. Furthermore, the question *uide ut*... (394) of the Satelles indicates that the scene is located in a place from which the activity on the battlefield can be seen.

73 See on 387–402.

74 881–99; see W.G. Thalmann, *Dramatic Art in Aeschylus' 'Seven Against Thebes'* (Connecticut and London, 1978), 21.

The brothers have agreed to rule alternately, a year at a time (476–8), an agreement which Eteocles breaks by refusing to give up the throne at the end of his year of kingship (482–3). The justice of Polyneices' cause is stated clearly, both by the Paidagogos (154–5) and by the chorus (258–60). Eteocles, on the other hand, is presented as a thoroughly wicked man. Nevertheless, it is Eteocles who is the defender of Thebes and Polyneices who is the attacker. The tension between the rightness of Polyneices' claims and the wrongness of his aggression against Thebes is central to Euripides' interpretation of the fraternal conflict. Something of this is found in Sen. *Phoen.* also, as when Jocasta says *derat aerumnis meis,/ ut et hostem* [i.e. Polyneices] *amarem* (370) and *causa repetentis bona est,/ mala sic petentis* (373–4). In this play also Polyneices is presented sympathetically – his fear and the misery of his position as an exile are described. Eteocles is painted in unrelieved black and it is noteworthy that in both plays Eteocles sums up his position with a *sententia* which reveals his unscrupulous lust for power.[75]

The theme of the unhappiness of exile, on which Euripides dwells at some length (387–405), perhaps because of its contemporary significance, is not expanded on by Seneca. However, the Roman poet, like the Greek, makes Jocasta bewail Polyneices marriage into a 'foreign' family and to lament the fact that she was not able to play her role at the wedding ceremony (E. *Ph.* 337–49, Sen. *Phoen.* 505–10). Polyneices' new awareness, as a result of his exile, of the significance of wealth is an important motive in both plays for his attempt to recover the kingship. In the Greek drama, Polyneices' statement of the power conferred by wealth (439–42) follows the exchange between him and Jocasta about his bride (423–5), and in the Senecan play the two themes are interwoven, as Polyneices claims that, being a poor exile, he is in a humiliating position in the household of his father-in-law (595–8). In both plays, Polyneices ends his speech with a *sententia* on the misery of being aristocratic but poor.[76]

In Euripides' *Phoenissae,* as Polyneices enters Thebes he voices his fear of treachery on the part of Eteocles (261–71), and, with regard to Jocasta he says: πέποιθα μέντοι μητρί, κοὐ πέποιθ' ἅμα (272). In Sen. *Phoen.*, too, Polyneices is portrayed as nervous (473–4), and Jocasta

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[75] E. *Ph.* 524–5 εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι/ κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν, τἄλλα δ'εὐσεβεῖν χρεών; Sen. *Phoen.* 664 *Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene.*

[76] E. *Ph.* 442 πένης γὰρ οὐδεν εὐγενὴς ἀνήρ; Sen. *Phoen.* 598 *in seruitutem cadere de regno graue est.*

asks him directly: *an timeo matris fidem?* (477), to which Polyneices replies that he does indeed doubt her loyalty because the laws of nature seem to have lost their force (478–9). Polyneices' mistrust of Eteocles is perhaps a natural consequence of the situation and its manifestation in the Senecan play need not be the result of Euripidean influence; however, his lack of faith in his mother's loyalty is more striking and may well have its origin in the Greek drama.

Moricca ((1918), 6–14) found for nearly two dozen passages in Sen. *Phoen.* corresponding passages in Euripides' *Phoenissae*, which, he believed, reveal Seneca's dependence (in part, at least) on the Greek play, and the *testimonia* to the Euripidean drama, collected by Mastronarde and Bremer, include in addition several passages not mentioned by Moricca.[77] An examination of these passages reveals that, apart from the outline of the story, certain themes present in Euripides' play occur also in Sen. *Phoen.* Some of these have been mentioned above; in addition, one may note that both in Euripides' *Phoenissae* (571–6) and in the Senecan play (565–82) Jocasta asks Polyneices how he can bring himself to destroy his city, that in both plays Jocasta expresses a low opinion of the desirability of kingship (E. *Ph.* 549–57, Sen. *Phoen.* 646–9), that Eteocles in the Roman, as in the Greek, drama ends the encounter with his brother by banishing him (E. *Ph.* 590–614, Sen. *Phoen.* 652–3). It is significant, however, that not one of the passages cited from Sen. *Phoen.* is strongly reminiscent of the Euripidean play in terms of language or imagery.

If there were close verbal parallels between Sen. *Phoen.* and Euripides' *Phoenissae*, one might conclude that Seneca borrowed directly from the Greek play. Since this is not the case, however, the nature of the influence of Euripides on Seneca is harder to assess. Certainly it is clear that Seneca did not slavishly follow Euripides' treatment of the legendary material, but, as has been seen, there are several notable similarities between the two dramas. These need not imply a direct utilisation by Seneca of material contained in the Greek drama. The dramatists of Republican Rome are generally acknowledged to have modelled their tragedies closely on those of their Greek predecessors and Seneca may have been influenced by Euripides indirectly through an earlier Roman play. Of the works of

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[77] D.J. Mastronarde and J.M. Bremer, *The Textual Tradition of Euripides' Phoinissai* (University of California Publications: Classical Studies 27; Berkley, Los Angeles, London, 1982), 409 compare Sen. *Phoen.* 477 with E. *Ph.* 470–2 and Sen. *Phoen.* 392 with E. *Ph.* 266; on 418, Sen. *Phoen.* 573–6 and E. *Ph.* 564–5 are compared.

the Republican dramatists, some fragments of Accius' *Phoenissae* have survived. Seneca's apparent contempt for the tragedians of the Republican period[78] makes it unlikely that he would have been influenced by the earlier Roman poet directly, but the Augustan dramatists are believed to have used the works of their Roman predecessors, and it is possible that Euripidean elements in Seneca can be accounted for in this way. Unfortunately, no Augustan drama on the same theme exists or is known ever to have existed.[79]

Seneca and Accius

A consideration of the fragments of Accius' *Phoenissae* may prove instructive. In that play, as in Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Oedipus is alive in Thebes during the battle between Eteocles and Polyneices, since he is not exiled until after their deaths and the suicide of Jocasta.[80] The curse of Oedipus on his sons appears to be omitted from Accius' play; at least, it does not furnish the reason for the brothers' decision to rule alternately, which it does in the Euripidean drama (67–9), since in Accius' version Oedipus himself institutes the sharing of the kingdom on his abdication.[81] This feature of the Republican drama may have a bearing on a puzzling aspect of Sen. *Phoen.*, namely the fact that although Oedipus abdicates voluntarily and apparently without rancour, Eteocles and Polyneices agree to share the kingship, whereas, under normal circumstances, the throne might be expected to pass automatically to the older son.[82] It may be that Seneca, like Accius, made Oedipus ordain the alternation of kingship; the fact that there is no reference to such an arrangement in the play as we have it does not preclude it, since Seneca may have intended a reference to it in a choral ode, a suitable place for the insertion of background material. If it were the case that the system of power-

[78] His quotations from them in his prose works tend to be popular tags or passages which are also quoted by other Latin authors (see G. Mazzoli, *Seneca e la Poesia* (Milan, 1970), 188–98), and he is known to have expressed contempt for Ennius (see Gell. 2.11).

[79] Julius Caesar is said to have written an *Oedipus* which Augustus refused to allow to be published (Suet. *Caes.* 56.7).

[80] Ribbeck^2, frg. 12 refers to Oedipus' exile.

[81] Ribbeck^2, frg. 3, *uicissitatemque imperitandi tradidit.*

[82] In Apollod. 3.6.1, as in DS 4.65.1, there is no explicit connection made between Oedipus' curse and the decision of the brothers to share the throne, but in the former, Oedipus is said to have cursed the sons before they agreed to rule alternately, and in the latter mention is made of their ill-treatment of him which might have provoked his curse as in E. *Ph.* (These authors probably depended heavily on the tragedians in their accounts of the Oedipus-story; see *RE* 34.2107.32ff.)

sharing had been established by Oedipus, Oedipus' indignation on his own behalf at 295 (*Illis parentis ullus aut aequi est amor*) would be far more meaningful. Certainly references to the agreement between the brothers to share the throne are not couched in terms which would exclude this possibility. Furthermore, the appeal of the Nuntius to Oedipus to intervene in the conflict points to his having some authority over his sons; this would be compatible with a version in which he himself had arranged the nature of the succession. However, even if Seneca did, like Accius, make Oedipus ordain the power-sharing, it does not prove that Seneca was in any way influenced by the earlier Roman dramatist, since the same element is found also in Hyginus *Fab.* 67 and in the writings of the Byzantine chronicler, Malalas,[83] which suggests that it was a common variation in the treatment of the legend.

As far as can be established from the surviving fragments of Accius' play, the general development of the plot followed that of Euripides *Phoenissae* closely.[84] In the final act of the Roman, as of the Attic, drama, Oedipus is banished by Creon[85] and one may assume that Antigone insists on accompanying her father into exile, as she does in the Greek play. However, the dependence of Seneca, whether direct or indirect, on the work of his Roman predecessor cannot be irrefutably established: as has been seen, it is possible that Seneca took over from Accius the notion of Oedipus' ordaining the power-sharing between the brothers, but the state of incompletion of Seneca's play does not permit us to be more definite than this.

The only feature in which the two plays agree is that in neither is the conflict of the brothers brought about by the curse of Oedipus whom they have imprisoned.[86] This, however, is not conclusive evidence of the influence of Accius on Seneca, since in Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* also Oedipus curses the brothers only after they have begun to quarrel over the throne. There are no close verbal echoes of Accius' play in Sen. *Phoen.*, although the opening verses of the

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[83] Quoted in Robert, *Oidipus*, 2.168: [ὁ Οἰδίπους] . . . ἐάσας τὸ βασίλειον τοῖς δυσὶν αὑτοῦ υἱοῖς, ἐνιαυτὸν βασιλεύειν κελεύσας.

[84] Ribbeck, röm. Trag., 480–2.

[85] Ribbeck², frg. 12 *iussit proficisci exilium quouis gentium/ ne scelere tuo Thebani uatescant agri.*

[86] Ribbeck, *röm. Trag.*, 481–2, must be correct in regarding frg. 9 (*incusant ultro, a fortuna opibusque omnibus/ desertum abiectum afflictum exanimum expectorant*) as referring to the exile of Oedipus rather than to his ill-treatment by his sons, since, as Mesk observes ((1915), 304), the voluntary abdication and the absence of the curse as motivation for the fraternal conflict cannot be reconciled with the theme of the brothers' maltreatment of their father.

former are highly reminiscent of Euripides' *Phoenissae.*[87] As matters stand, then, it seems that both Accius and Seneca were influenced by Euripides, but, in view of the highly fragmentary nature of Accius' *Phoenissae*, it cannot be satisfactorily shown that the Euripidean elements in the Senecan drama reached it via Accius.

Conclusion

John Herington has suggested that Seneca's mode of composition in his prose works and his tragedies 'was . . . that of free modelling in his own manner around some relatively simple armature provided by tradition; that he worked *currente calamo* with no other man's book open before him continually, but with a thousand literary memories swarming in his brain'.[88] This is borne out with regard to *Phoen.*, which does not reveal a great dependence on any Greek or Roman drama, certainly not enough to justify the use of the word 'model' with reference to any one of its extant predecessors. The evidence suggests that Seneca knew the general outline of Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* and of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but that he was more familiar with Euripides' *Phoenissae.* Following Tarrant's thesis,[89] one may choose to believe that, had an Augustan tragedy entitled *Phoenissae* survived (and no such tragedy is known to have existed), it would have been clear that the Euripidean elements in Sen. *Phoen.* were drawn from the Roman drama and not directly from the Greek.[90] However, there is no good reason to suppose that the existence of such a play would reveal that Sen. *Phoen.* was closely modelled on it. Given Seneca's independence from such works of his dramatic predecessors as have survived,[91] it seems clear that Seneca was not bound to any one particular version of the legendary material; it would, therefore, be perverse to refuse, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to ascribe to him the originality of a dramatic creation in which two strands of the legend are drawn together into a unique drama of counterpoise and contrast.

[87] See Ribbeck, *röm. Trag.*, 476.
[88] Review of R.J. Tarrant, *Seneca: Agamemnon* in *Phoenix* 32 (1978), 270–5 at 274.
[89] *HSCPh* 82 (1978), 214.
[90] However, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.67–8, who asserts that of the three Attic tragedians *iis qui se ad agendum comparant utiliorem longe fore Euripiden*, because of his *sententiae* and his treatment of the emotions.
[91] See Robert, *Oidipus*, 1.491–510 for a survey of the numerous Greek playwrights, apart from the Attic triad, who are known to have written tragedies about Oedipus and the house of Thebes.

Non-dramatic influences

The Oedipus legend was well-known: mothers taught it, probably in a variety of versions, to their children, who later would have learnt it at school, it would have been included in histories and handbooks of mythology (like those of Diodorus, Apollodorus, and Hyginus)[92] which have not survived, and in works of art.[93] Thus Seneca would have grown up knowing about the Oedipus story, perhaps being familiar with more than one version of it. This folk-knowledge is lost to us, but it must be recognised that it would probably have been Seneca's primary source and may have been responsible for certain of what appear to be Senecan innovations in the treatment of the Theban legend: the designation of the weapon with which Laius was killed as a sword,[94] the notion that Oedipus may at some point have had incestuous designs on Antigone,[95] the idea of Jocasta's placing herself as a human buffer between her sons on the battlefield,[96] the establishment of the length of Polyneices' exile as three years,[97] the possible banishment of Jocasta by Eteocles at the end of the play.[98] Seneca may well have invented these details for himself, but it must be acknowledged that we cannot be sure, given that the oral tradition and contemporary versions of the Theban legend, to which Seneca had access, are lost to us.

Moricca ((1917), 491–3) believed that Seneca's intentions for the ending of *Phoen.* were influenced by Livy's account of the story of Coriolanus, who is persuaded by his mother Veturia not to attack Rome (Liv. 2.40). The verbal correspondences adduced by Moricca are not striking,[99] but it is true that the general situation is similar and certain ideas in Livy's account are found also in Seneca, which may point to the influence of the former on the latter.[100]

Recently, Bremer *et al.*, 170–2, considered the influence on Sen. *Phoen.* of Stesichorus' fragmentary poem preserved in the 'Lille Papy-

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[92] On the differences and similarities between the treatments of the Theban legend by these authors, see Robert, *Oidipus,* 1.511–48.
[93] See Robert, *Oidipus, passim* for examples of artistic representations.
[94] See on 106–7.
[95] See on 48 and 222–3.
[96] Cf. 405–14.
[97] See on 370–1.
[98] Cf. 652–3 and see note *ad loc.*
[99] See Intro., 11.
[100] viz. the ambivalence felt by the mothers towards their sons who are also their enemies (Liv. 2.40.5; Sen. *Phoen.* 369–70); the thought, expressed in Liv. 2.40.8, that if Veturia had not had a son, there would be no war, occurs in a slightly different form in Sen. *Phoen.* 523–4, where Jocasta says: *nempe si tu non fores,/ bello carerem.*

rus'. Stesichorus' poem contains the earliest extant version of a reconciliation scene between Jocasta and her sons,[101] by which the equivalent scene in E. *Ph.* seems to have been influenced.[102] The similarities between the reconciliation scenes of Seneca and Stesichorus, are, however, not striking and the direct line of development from Stesichorus to Euripides to Seneca which Bremer *et al.*, postulate[103] fails to take into account treatments of the legend between Stesichorus and Euripides, and between Euripides and Seneca, which have not survived and by which both dramatists may have been influenced.

4. Philosophy, Rhetoric and Politics in *Phoenissae*

Philosophy

Why did Seneca the philosopher write plays? This question has teased the minds of scholars, who often appear to believe in what Motto and Clark call 'a kind of unwritten "law of literary specialization"',[104] which prevents a philosopher from writing anything other than philosophy or a tragedian anything other than tragedy. This belief, bolstered by Seneca's own statements concerning the efficacy and value of poetry as a vehicle for philosophical instruction,[105] has led many scholars to declare in one way or another that Seneca's plays have as their purpose the teaching of philosophy. Berthe Marti[106] took up an extreme position: that Senecan drama consists of a collection of Stoic propaganda-plays and that these plays, in the order in which they appear in *E* (beginning and ending with a Hercules play), form a philosophical whole and were conceived of by Seneca 'as a sort of glorified Essay on Man' (222–3). This has been generally rejected, but belief in the didactic purpose of Senecan drama is nonetheless widespread. One reads, for example, that in the tragedies the aim of Seneca 'war kein dichterischer, sondern ein pädagogischer',[107] that

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[101] It is not impossible that this scene was an innovation on the part of Stesichorus himself; see Bremer *et al.*, 166–7.

[102] *Ibid.*, 169–70.

[103] *Ibid.*, 172: 'The invention of the archaic Greek Poet, viz. a micro-economic solution from a domestic problem of inheritancc, has – via thc transmitter Euripides – inspired a Roman drama enveloping the whole οἰκουμένη.'

[104] A.L. Motto and J.R. Clark, 'Art and Ethics in the Dramas: Senecan "Pseudotragedy" Reconsidered' *ICS* 7 (1982), 125–40 at 127.

[105] Cf. *Ep.* 33.6; 108.9–10, 24–38.

[106] 'Seneca's Tragedies. A New Interpretation' *TAPhA* 76 (1945), 216–45.

[107] Birt (1911), 336.

'auch im tragischen Raum sollte die Philosophie den Primat besitzen',[108] that in his plays 'Seneca has, above all, a philosophic aim',[109] that 'Seneca uses the legends as parables to illustrate his theories of ethics and psychology',[110] that 'it is largely the tone of Stoic doctrine that gives to the plays a certain unity of atmosphere',[111] that the dramas reflect 'Seneca's overall purpose of dramatizing the traditional stories Neo-Stoically',[112] that 'Seneca . . . was pursuing a Stoic goal also in his drama'.[113]

There are two main difficulties with the contention that Seneca wrote tragedies to disseminate and popularise Stoicism through drama. One is the fact that although Seneca inspires admiration for the morally good characters, like Antigone in *Phoen.*, there is a stronger fascination for the evil characters, like Atreus, Clytemnaestra, and Medea.[114] The other is the presence in the plays of elements and themes which are definitely un-Stoic – the ghosts, the underworld, the concept of hereditary evil, the atmosphere of disorder and hopelessness with which some of the plays, most notably *Oedip.*[115] and *Phaedr.*,[116] conclude. Stoic thought and maxims do occur in Senecan drama, but Senecan drama is not Stoic drama. Henry and Walker have warned against isolating Stoic statements in the plays and treating them as independent of their dramatic context: they observe that in two instances in *Phaedr.* where expressions of Stoic thought occur,[117] the Stoic response is shown to be inadequate in the context of the drama.[118] Moreover, there is a tendency to label as 'Stoic' max-

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[108] Paul, 81.
[109] P.J. Enk, 'Roman Tragedy' *Neophilologus* 41 (1957), 282–309 at 302.
[110] Ian Scott-Kilvert, 'Seneca or Scenario?' *Arion* 7 (1968), 501–11 at 502.
[111] Clarence W. Mendell, *Our Seneca* (Archon Books, 1968), 153.
[112] Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 132.
[113] Rosenmayer, x. For an account of the opinions of earlier scholars, see Dingel, 11–13; Dingel himself sees the tragedies as a *negation* of Seneca's philosophy (see esp. 72ff.).
[114] See Fantham, *Sen. Troad.*, 18; also Tarrant, *Sen. Thyest.*, 23–5.
[115] See Mastronarde (1970), 309 esp. n.30; Henry & Walker (1983), 138, observe: '*Oedipus* then offers nothing to set against desolation . . .'.
[116] Henry & Walker (1966), 239: 'The theme of the *Phaedra* can be stated as "Chaos is come again". . . . In the *Phaedra* the absence of *consensus* and *unitas* is expressed in poetical terms of personal disharmony, that of Phaedra, leading to her own disintegration and the spread of chaos outside.' For a somewhat different interpretation of the sense of chaos with which one is left at the end of the play, see the conclusion of P.J. Davis, 'Vindicat omnes natura sibi: a Reading of Seneca's Phaedra' in *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama* ed. A.J. Boyle (Victoria, 1983), 126.
[117] in the Nurse's utterance at 140–1 (with which Peripatetics would also have agreed) and in Hippolytus' response to the Nurse at 483–5.
[118] *G & R* (1966), 224–5.

ims and ideas to which the Stoics may have subscribed, but which are in fact philosophical or literary commonplaces.[119] For instance, the depiction of the struggle between reason and passion which is at the centre of most Senecan drama is commonly identified as a major Stoic element, but the same struggle fascinated Euripides and, as Tarrant observes,[120] 'is a leading theme . . . in the two greatest works of Augustan literature, the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*'. And the maxim that death is easy to find since many paths lead to it (*Phoen.* 151–3) would be acceptable to a Stoic and Seneca says similar things in his prose, but it is also a literary commonplace.[121]

In the first section of *Phoen.* (1–362), the influence of Seneca's Stoicism is, however, apparent in the discussion about suicide which is the main theme of this part of the play. Antigone tries to dissuade Oedipus from suicide by urging the Stoic principle of detachment with regard to death (197–8 *nemo contempsit mori/ qui concupiuit*); Oedipus reveals initially the *libido moriendi* condemned by Seneca the philosopher, but his subsequent yielding to Antigone's wish that he remain alive conforms to the belief expressed elsewhere by Seneca that 'sometimes even to live is to act bravely' (*Ep.* 78.2).[122] The injunctions of Antigone to face misfortune with courage conform to Stoic teaching and some scholars have gone so far as to regard her as an *exemplum* of Stoic virtue which emerges triumphant from the battle between Reason and Passion, as Oedipus capitulates in the face of her distress.[123] This view ignores certain un-Stoic aspects of Antigone's behaviour, notably her assertion that she will not ask Oedipus to abandon his anger (186–7) and possibly her excessive attachment to him (61–79) – to the point of being willing to die with him. In any case, to regard Antigone, and by extrapolation, Oedipus, purely as Stoic *exempla* would be to distort the nature of the work. *Phoen.* is a play, not a philosophical tract, and the characters are made to speak and act as they do to conform with the author's dramatic purpose. Stoic ideas may lie behind the play, but these are subordinate to the dramatic concerns: Oedipus agrees to abandon his plan to commit suicide not to show the victory of Stoic reason over un-Stoic passion,

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119 See Canter, 40–55, for numerous examples of philosophical commonplaces in the dramas.

120 *Sen. Thyest.*, 23.

121 See on 151 and on 151–3.

122 See further on 77–9.

123 See Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 102–3; Herrmann, *Théâtre*, 427–8, considers Seneca's Antigone to be 'trop pleine de philosophie stoïcienne'.

but because he must be alive to reject the request of the Nuntius for his intervention between the brothers.[124] His rejection of the request and his persistence in his (un-Stoic) hatred of his sons is necessary because Seneca's purpose in the play is to set Oedipus' negative response to the blows dealt him by Fortune against the positive response of Jocasta. In the second part of *Phoen.* (363–664), Jocasta urges her sons to return to the path of virtue and expresses concern about the corrupting effect of kingship on the character (582–4). The Stoics would have commended these attitudes, but they do not make Seneca's Jocasta a mouthpiece for Stoic propaganda, any more than Euripides' Jocasta, who says much the same things.

Rhetoric

Senecan tragedy has frequently been disparaged as 'rhetorical drama', most notoriously by T.S. Eliot's dictum: 'In the plays of Seneca, the drama is all in the word, and the word has no further reality behind it. His characters all seem to speak with the same voice, and at the top of it; they recite in turn'.[125] It is certainly true that the influence of Seneca's declamatory background[126] is strong, too strong at times for the good of the drama. Static monologues of great length abound, dialogue is almost exclusively confined to point-scoring in stichomythic exchanges, and the self-conscious striving for effect, very apparent in the *sententiae* with which the plays abound and in the purple passages of description, can give the impression of artificiality, of words for the sake of words only.

In *Phoen.*, the influence of declamation is easily discernible. The first act (1–319), in which Antigone urges Oedipus not to commit suicide, is a *suasoria* in dramatic form;[127] the sections of Act 4 which depict Jocasta trying to dissuade Polyneices from his intention to attack Thebes (esp. 525–85) are likewise reminiscent of a *suasoria*. The situation portrayed in the second half of the play as a whole is as complex and paradoxical as that of any *controuersia*: Polyneices is

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[124] And also, ultimately, perhaps because the traditional form of the legend demanded Oedipus' death at Colonus, although we have no evidence for this in Seneca's time.

[125] In Eliot's introduction to *Seneca: His Tenne Tragedies Translated Into English* ed. T. Newton (London, 1581; ed. and with intro. by T.S. Eliot, London and New York, 1927), ix.

[126] On this, see Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, chap. 5.

[127] as are the scenes between the protagonist and a nurse or attendant in other Senecan plays; see Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 151.

both the victim of Eteocles' injustice and the *hostis* of Thebes, since in attempting to avenge the wrong done him by his brother he is committing a greater wrong; Jocasta urges Polyneices to desist from war, but recognises that if he does so, he will be lost to her (520–5); Polyneices, in trying to regain his right to the throne, is about to destroy the city he hopes to rule (555–62).

Many of the features of the plays identified by Canter as being declamatory[128] are present in *Phoen.*: sudden transitions or changes of mood;[129] passages in which the emotions of a person seeing a vision is described;[130] parts which contain entreaties, supplications, or imprecations;[131] adynata;[132] ambiguous or enigmatic expressions in which the real meaning of the words must be conveyed by the speaker's tone of voice and the use of emphasis;[133] monologues or virtual monologues within the play.[134] The desire of Seneca to make every word count, to hold his audience's attention by his verbal *tours de force* is evidenced in *Phoen.*, as in the other plays, not only by the numerous *sententiae*,[135] but also by the vivid and usually gruesome detail with which scenes of violence are described,[136] the fondness for rhetorical figures such as apostrophe,[137] rhetorical questions,[138] anaphora,[139] paronomasia,[140], chiasmus,[141] parallelism of clause,[142] asyndeton,[143]

[128] Canter, 55–69.

[129] Cf. esp. *Phoen.* 49–50, 140, 241, 306–19, 584–5.

[130] as at *Phoen.* 39–45.

[131] Cf. *Phoen.* 535–42.

[132] Cf. *Phoen.* 85–9.

[133] as at *Phoen.* 50 *discede uirgo. timeo post matrem omnia* and 241–2 *occidi patrem/ sed matrem amaui.*

[134] Oedipus' speeches are mostly virtual monologues – 'virtual' because technically they are part of the dialogue between him and Antigone.

[135] *Phoen.* 98, 100, 152–3, 197–8, 386, 598, 629, 654, 659, 660, 664.

[136] as at *Phoen.* 159–65, 173–81. Bonner, *Rom. Decl.,* 165, observes that this 'may perhaps be partly a Spanish characteristic, but probably owes something to the declaimers'. Certainly evidence of a similar dwelling on the details of acts of violence can be found in the writings of the Seneca the Elder: cf. *Contr.* 1.7.9; 2.5.4–6; 9.2.4; 10.4.2–3.

[137] Cf. *Phoen.* 155, 178.

[138] The most striking instance in *Phoen.* occurs at 565–84, where there are no fewer than ten rhetorical questions in succession.

[139] e.g., *sequor, sequor* 40, *non hunc . . . non hunc* 56–8, *quid . . . quid . . . quid* 234–6, *iubente te . . . iubente te* 318–19, *hoc . . . hoc* 367–8, *ibo, ibo* 12, 407.

[140] See *uideo . . . uideor* 9, *patris . . . pater* 55, *salus . . . saluum* 89–90, *regna . . . regnum* 104, *frater . . . fratrem* 355, *petere . . . petat* 403, *pectus . . . pectori* 470, *ferrum . . . ferri* 483, *fallere . . . falli* 493, *uincere . . . uiceris* 640, *Cadmus . . . Cadmi* 647.

[141] The most striking examples occur at 77, 155, 216, 404.

[142] as at 76, *si moreris, antecedo, si uiuis, sequor.*

[143] Cf., e.g., 296, 304, 327, 340–6.

metonomy,[144] and others. Nevertheless, the rhetorical flourishes, like the Stoic elements, are not an end in themselves, but are subordinated to Seneca's dramatic purpose. Thus, Oedipus' outbursts of longing for death in the first act (1–319) of the play are not merely displays of verbal pyrotechnics; they are also a response to the threatening conflict of the brothers which is to be contrasted to the very different response of Jocasta.

It has frequently been observed that Seneca's *dramatis personae*, like the characters in declamation, tend to represent types rather than individuals.[145] Certainly in *Phoen.* one might with justification see Antigone as a stereotype of the devoted daughter and Eteocles as a stock tyrant,[146] but they are not the main characters. These – Oedipus and Jocasta – could hardly be described as types, so unique is their situation. They are not rounded characters – Seneca's focus is too narrow for that – but they are not stereotypes. Perhaps one of the reasons for the tendency to regard Senecan characters as types or as cardboard figures is to be found in Eliot's statement: 'His characters all seem to speak with the same voice, and at the top of it . . . '. The constant striving after verbal effects and clever arguments results in the portrayal of character's being relegated to a secondary position. Senecan characters tend to produce a cleverly-worded, persuasive, and well-reasoned response in whatever situation they find themselves, irrespective of considerations of ἦθος: thus Antigone, can argue with the competence of a philosopher against her father's decision to commit suicide. It must be acknowledged, nevertheless, that although Senecan characters argue with uniform skill, the nature of their arguments can differ greatly: for instance, Antigone uses altruistic, moral arguments, while Eteocles is entirely self-centered. There is, however, a sameness about the way in which characters express emotion, irrespective of their age, sex, status, and situation: for instance, Medea's anger against Jason and her desire to find a fitting punishment for him (*Med.* 893ff.) is expressed in terms very similar to Oedipus' outpouring of self-loathing in *Phoen.*[147]

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[144] as in *manes* for *mors* 235, *arma* for *bellum* 296, *aera* for *tuba* 389, *sol* for *dies* 516, *thalamus* for *coniugium* 515 and for *coniunx* 627.

[145] Thus, according to Bonner (*Rom. Decl.*, 162) 'Lycus in the *Hercules Furens* is a stock tyrant, Hercules himself the stock "uir fortis"; Phaedra is the stock *nouerca*; Medea is certainly *ferox inuictaque* . . .'.

[146] On the tyrants in Senecan drama, see Opelt, 274–5.

[147] See Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 152.

Politics

This sameness, however, need not imply that Eliot was correct in his verdict that 'the drama is all in the word, and the word has no further reality behind it'. There *is* a reality behind Senecan tragedy, but not the dramatic reality sought by Eliot, nor yet – at least not exclusively – the philosophical reality discerned by Pratt. He has observed that 'the prevalence of high pitch and violence in Senecan drama is completely consistent with the Stoic view that passion is rampant in nature and with the militant Stoic defense against adversity'.[148] This is so, but there is more to the atmosphere of destruction and the strong emotions than their acceptability in Stoic terms. The reality underlying these highly-charged and violent tragedies is social and political: Senecan drama can only be fully understood and appreciated as a product of the times and circumstances in which the author lived.

The details of Seneca's life are well known. It is sufficient to recall here that he nearly lost his life under Gaius, that he was recalled from exile in AD 49 by Agrippina, and that he subsequently lived at the nerve-centre of the Roman world, the imperial court, first as Nero's tutor and later as his political adviser, for well over a decade. In AD 62, threatened by enemies at court, he retired to the country, where he committed suicide in AD 65, following his implication in the Pisonian conspiracy. To whichever period one dates the tragedies, it is clear that Seneca had ample opportunity to experience at close quarters the savagery, the capriciousness, and the terror of uncertainty associated with imperial rule and resulting from imperial paranoia. Seneca's tragedies have been condemned as bombastic, exaggerated, melodramatic, and violent. They are all these things, at least partly because Senecan drama mirrors through the traditional legends[149] the distorted lives and perverted values of those within the imperial circle. Both evil and good were monstrously magnified in Seneca's world under the strain imposed by fear and insecurity and thus, in the dramas too, characters tend to extremes, which contributes to the perception of them as less than real and as types rather than individuals.

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[148] Norman T. Pratt, 'The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama' *TAPhA* 79 (1948), 1–11 at 10.

[149] Bonner, *Rom. Decl.*, 162, observes that Seneca appears to have selected from the ranges of legendary material and tragic precedents those which contain 'the most sensational themes'; see also D. & E. Henry, *Mask*, 159–60.

The assimilation of the world of the tragedies to that of imperial Rome of the first century AD is encouraged not only by the general similarity of ethos, but also by the presence in the dramas of words and phrases which are specifically Roman in their significance. In *Phoen.*, for example, we find a reference to an *aquila* (390), to the swift arrows of the Parthians (428), and to a triumph (578). It is difficult to discern, however, whether such anachronisms were deliberately included by Seneca for this purpose and what effect their presence would have had on his contemporaries.[150]

The similarity of ethos between Seneca's real world and the fictional world of the tragedies does not mean that the dramas are 'political essays'[151] or opposition literature tortuously written in political code.[152] There is, however, in the dramas a fascination with, and a pessimistic attitude toward, kingship and the corrupting effect of power, which must surely have its roots in Seneca's personal experience of the principate[153] and which suggest that the plays may have been written as expressions of Seneca's attitude to, and disillusionment with, the political life in which he was involved. Of all the rulers in the tragedies, Agamemnon in *Troad.* alone desires to exercise his authority with the moderation, justice, mercy, and courage which Seneca recommends in the *De Clementia*,[154] but Fate intervenes (349ff.) and Agamemnon is vanquished; for the rest, the dramas portray the tyrannical abuse of power[155] and examine the dangers involved in kingship.[156] In *Phoen.*, the exchange which concludes the extant portion of the play is entirely concerned with attitudes to power and the nature of kingly rule: it has little dramatic significance – Eteocles' lust

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150 On the whole subject, see Walter.

151 So R.B. Steele, 'Some Roman Elements in the Tragedies of Seneca' *AJPh* 43 (1922), 1–31 at 2.

152 So J.D. Bishop, *Seneca's Daggered Stylus: Political Code in the Tragedies* (Beiträge zur Klassische Philologie 168) (Königstein, 1985), 3.

153 That Seneca identified, at least to some degree, the principate with kingship is borne out by *Clem.*, in which *rex* is used of Nero, not directly, admittedly, but certainly by implication (1.8.1 and see Griffin, 141). Griffin, 143, suggests that Seneca used the word *rex*, which was still commonly regarded as a derogatory term in his time, because, influenced by Hellenistic treatises on kingship, 'he wished to apply to the *princeps* the conception of βασιλεύς as opposed to the τύραννος'. In the tragedies, of course, the *rex* (apart from Agamemnon in *Troad.*) is invariably a τύραννος in the Hellenistic sense.

154 See D. & E. Henry, *Mask*, 163.

155 Cf. *Herc. Fur.* 501–20; *Oedip.* 518–29, 703–4; *Agam.* 270–3; *Thyest.* 205–18; *Phoen.* 653–64. Opelt, 274–5, identifies Lycus, Pyrrhus, Creon, Aegisthus, Oedipus, Atreus, and Eteocles as representing different degrees of tyranny.

156 Cf. *Oedip.* 6–11, *Troad.* 1–6, *Agam.* 57–107.

for power and lack of *pietas* have long since been established – but indicates Seneca's interest in the subject.

5. Staging

General Considerations

The principal proponent in the earlier part of this century of the view that Seneca wrote his tragedies for stage performance was Léon Herrmann;[157] the fullest and most cogent argument for the idea that he wrote for recitation was put forward in 1966 by Otto Zwierlein in *Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas.*

The case presented by Zwierlein is by no means completely convincing[158] and his ideas about what the Romans would have considered stageable are rather narrow. His conclusion, however, that Seneca's tragedies were *Rezitationsdramen,* has won some acceptance,[159] although there are still those who support the notion that the plays were intended for production in the theatre and who point out the dramatic power of many scenes[160] in answer to the opponents of stage performance, who draw attention to their undramatic qualities, most notably their lack of internal cohesion – the independence of the individual scene has often been mentioned – their rhetorical excesses, their lack of clear stage directions.

In recent years, the discussion has become more sophisticated. Fantham has pointed out that to classify Seneca's plays as *Rezitationsdramen* is not unproblematic: we know little about the way in which a *recitatio* was presented, but the evidence suggests that the author was the only reciter; if this was the case, the passages of stichomythia in

[157] See *Théâtre,* 153–96. References to earlier work on the subject are to be found *passim* in the footnotes on these pages. For subsequent bibliography, see Sutton, 1 n.2.

[158] as was pointed out with vigour by B. Walker, reviewing Zwierlein's book in *CPh* 65 (1969), 183–7.

[159] See, e.g., Costa, *Sen. Med.,* 5–6; Pratt, *Seneca's Drama,* 15–21; Hirschberg, *Sen. Phoen.,* 1–2.

[160] See C. Zintzen, 'Alte uirtus animosa cadit': Gedanken zur Darstellung des Tragischen in Senecas *Hercules Furens*' in *Senecas Tragodien* ed. Eckard Lefèvre (Darmstadt, 1972), 175–6 n.84; William M. Calder III, 'The Size of the Chorus in Seneca's *Agamemnon*' *CPh* 70 (1975), 32–5 (favours performance in small, private theatre); S. Fortey and J. Glucker, 'Actus tragicus: Seneca on the Stage' *Latomus* 34 (1975), 699–715; R.G. Tanner, 'Stoic Philosophy and Roman Tradition in Senecan Tragedy', *ANRW* 2.32.2, 1101ff.

Seneca's plays could hardly have been tendered effectively,[161] and, at least in the case of *Med.* 170–1, in such a way as to make it clear to the audience who was speaking.[162] Even the notion of a concert reading, with several readers participating and one part being assigned to each, would not eliminate all the problems, since it raises some of the same difficulties which would be involved in a stage production.[163]

There is no external evidence to suggest that Seneca's plays were performed in the theatre in his lifetime. There is, however, an indication that, even in the Augustan period, tragedies were written without a view to stage performance: although Varius' *Thyestes* was performed at the celebration of Octavian's victory at Actium,[164] Ovid says *nil equidem feci . . . theatris* (*Trist.* 5.7.27), which suggests that he did not think of his *Medea* as a stage play; in *Trist.* 2.553–4, likewise, Ovid does not connect his play with the theatre.[165] The plays of Pomponius Secundus, Seneca's contemporary, seem to have been presented first in the reciting hall and then on stage.[166] However, in the time of Vespasian, Maternus is only recorded as having thought of presenting his plays as recitations, executed by himself,[167] although he, like Pomponius, may have assumed that they would be performed on stage at a later date. It is thus clear that in the first century AD tragedies were both brought to the stage and presented as recitations, and that the same play might be recited and afterwards acted in the theatre. With regard to the recitation of Seneca's tragedies, the only external evidence there is, is too slight to be conclusive,[168] although the fact that he was clearly writing for an educated audience which he ex-

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[161] Fantham, *Sen. Troad.*, 46–8.

[162] Herington, 445.

[163] See Fantham, *Sen. Troad.*, 48. W. Beare, 'Plays for Performance and Plays for Recitation: A Roman Contrast' *Hermathena* 65 (1945), 8–19 at 15, who generally subscribes to the view of Seneca's plays as *Rezitationsdramen*, nevertheless recognises some of the problems involved in this kind of presentation; he says, for example: 'I have some difficulty here with *Agamemnon* 108–124; the monologue represents Clytaemnestra's thoughts, and at line 125 the Nurse asks her why she is brooding in silence. How did the reciter make this passage plausible?'.

[164] Cod. Paris. 7530.

[165] although Tarrant ((1978), 260) points out that here 'Ovid's apologetic purpose may well have determined his presentation of facts', since shortly before he described the Roman theatre as a hotbed of vice.

[166] Plin. *Ep.* 7.17; Tac. *Ann.* 11.13.

[167] Tac. *Or.* 2.1–3.3.

[168] Quintilian's observation that he heard Seneca and Pomponius Secundus debating a point of tragic diction before a recitation (*Inst.* 8.3.31 *nam memini iuuenis admodum inter Pomponium ac Senecam etiam praefationibus esse tractatum an 'gradus eliminat' in tragoediis dici oportuisset*) may imply that Seneca was about to recite one of his tragedies (*praefationes* were the introductory observations of a playwright about to present a

pected to be familiar with the legendary background supports this view.[169]

The question which has vexed scholars for nearly two centuries has concerned the method of presentation intended by Seneca when he wrote his plays. Recently Hine has observed that 'one must get away from intentionalist talk of writing "for the stage" or "for reading", because in all probability Seneca simply thought in terms of writing tragedies'.[170] And a tragedy was, by definition, a stage play. This does not mean that at all periods tragedies were presented on the stage or exclusively on the stage; recitation was clearly a popular alternative and was perhaps more popular than theatrical performance at certain times. If, then, Seneca's dramas are by definition stage plays, but stage plays were not always performed on the stage, the question that needs to be considered is how much Seneca knew about writing for the stage.

Phoenissae

In a recent study of Seneca's dramatic technique, Sutton has shown that most of the practical difficulties traditionally associated with the stage production of Seneca's tragedies are reconcilable with what we know of the limitations and conventions of the Roman theatre. He questions whether any changes of setting are demanded in *Phoen.* and suggests (15–16) that Seneca may have intended to locate the whole play in the woods near Cithaeron, bringing Eteocles and Polyneices to Jocasta instead of the other way round. The text, however, suggests nothing of the kind.

The two scene changes in *Phoen.* call into question Seneca's awareness of, and concern for, the practicalities of composition for the stage. The first scene change could be accommodated fairly easily by using a backdrop of a rugged mountainside which could be removed after 362. The second would be tricky, since Jocasta is imagined as being in the view of the Satelles and Antigone as she flees to the battlefield, which she reaches at 433, before the act ends.[171] One might perhaps

new work; see Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 164–5), but equally, it could have been Pomponius' work that was about to be presented, or, in fact, a composition of a third party.

[169] See Intro., 13 n.45, and commentary on 243–62, 280–2.

[170] Review of recent works (by Fantham, Pratt, Boyle, Zwierlein, Tarrant, Bishop, Henry and Henry) in *JRS* 77 (1987), 256–8 at 256–7.

[171] See further on 427–42.

envisage a divided and split-level set. The Satelles, Antigone, and Jocasta would stand on the roof of the stage house, which would represent the city walls from 363–442, when Jocasta would descend and move across the stage to the other side, which would be the battlefield. The problem with this is the presence of Eteocles and Polyneices – would they be present on stage throughout Jocasta's lament and the exchange between her, the Satelles, and Antigone? If so, there would be five actors on stage at the same time, and although Seneca violates Horace's three-actor rule (Hor. *AP.* 192) in other plays,[172] he never uses more than four actors. If not, at what point would they enter? If one envisages an undivided stage for the third act, with the *scaenae frons* representing the city, one must imagine that Jocasta leaves the stage at 426 and that in 427–42 the Satelles describes to the audience her movements offstage. The Satelles and Antigone would have to make an uncued and abrupt exit at 442, however the act were staged.

The fourth act is stageable, but does not reveal a theatrical consciousness. Jocasta stands between her sons, challenging them and their forces to turn their weapons against her (443–8). Tension runs high as Jocasta pleads with the brothers to abandon their warlike intentions (449–59). She finally concentrates her attention on the exile, Polyneices, with whom she is as last reunited (460–79). This is good, dramatic stuff. The silent presence of Eteocles is not. Eteocles must presumably be imagined as being on stage throughout the fourth act since he is present both at the beginning and at the end of it,[173] yet he says nothing until 651. This is enormously awkward in dramatic terms, not to say implausible. Seneca creates dramatic tension and a sense of urgency by locating the episode on the battlefield itself; yet, in this heightened atmosphere, Eteocles remains mute even when Jocasta accuses him of being *causa . . . ferri . . . prior* (483) and when Polyneices refers to his faithlessness, perjury, deceit, and crimes (588–90).[174]

Sutton's examination of Seneca's dramatic technique leads him to conclude (61) that Seneca probably intended his plays to be performed on stage in a normal Roman theatre (as opposed to private domestic performance). The frequent omission of 'implicit stage directions' in

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[172] though, according to Sutton's analysis, only in the second act of *Oedip.* and the final act of *Agam.* is a fourth actor required (28–32).

[173] On the allocation of 651 *Numeret*-664, see *ad loc.*

[174] Other unnatural silences occur in Senecan drama. In the fourth act of *Troad.* (861–1008) Polyxena, the central figure, does not speak and Andromache answers

Senecan drama Sutton explains, 58–9, as resulting, not from the fact that Seneca was not writing for the stage, but from his ineptitude as a dramatist. This ineptitude is very marked in *Phoen.*, in which there are no entrance cues and only two exit cues (359–62, 427), Eteocles has to be identified by a process of elimination, and the Satelles is never identified. Sutton is forced to conclude (57) that 'Seneca would have paid more attention to dramaturgy, resolved evident problems regarding such issues as the setting of the play, and added more passages of a stage direction nature, at a later stage of composition'. He does not suggest how and where such passages might have been fitted into the text. Given that the four extant acts do not show other signs of incompletion, it seems unlikely that Seneca's regular method of composition involved returning to completed scenes to insert verses which would supply stage directions, whether implicit or explicit. The dearth of stage directions in *Phoen.*, probably Seneca's last play,[175] suggests only that Seneca lacked an understanding of the practicalities of stage performance.

If one favours recitation over stage performance as the more likely medium for the presentation of Seneca's tragedies, one has to contend with the fact that recitation also, particularly solo recitation, poses problems in some respects. The use of the demonstrative pronouns in *Phoen.* 488, 495–6, and 500 is one such instance, since Jocasta's avoidance of her sons' names would be confusing.[176] The stichomythic exchange between Jocasta and Eteocles would present difficulties for the solo reciter. Granted that he might be able to vary the pitch and tone of his voice so as to reflect the changes of speaker, he would not be able to make clear, as an actor could by gesturing or turning towards the relevant character, that *te* (652) referred to Polyneices rather than to Jocasta,[177] to whom the first part of Eteocles' utterance (651 *Numeret*–652 *iacere*) is addressed.

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for her. Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 45–7, ascribes this to Seneca's respect for the Horatian three-actor rule, but compare Fantham, *Sen. Troad.*, 40, who points out that even if Seneca were concerned to abide by this rule, he could have left Andromache out of the scene, thus enabling Polyxena to speak for herself (as in E. *Hec.*). In the third act (592ff.) of *Herc. Fur.*, Megara is silent when Hercules returns from the underworld, and it is Amphitryon who embraces and welcomes him. Again Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 48, attempts to explain Megara's silence in terms of the three-actor rule, but compare Fitch, *Sen. Herc. Fur.*, 274 n.92, who observes that this could have been circumvented.

175 See Intro., 43–4.

176 See further *ad loc.*

177 See *ad loc.*

The sum of the evidence suggests that although Seneca maintained some of the conventions of the stage,[178] his grasp of dramatic technique was far from secure. This is probably because dramas were not regularly or exclusively performed on stage at this period and Seneca therefore lacked an awareness of the practical demands of writing for the theatre – as Godley put it, 'it is the consciousness of the stage that makes plays'.[179] It seems likely that Seneca expected the plays to be known in their entirety only through written copies, although extracts or individual scenes might be presented on stage or at a recitation or dramatised reading.[180]

Moreover, the very nature of the dramas makes them unpromising as complete stage plays. Scholars have pointed to the dramatic power of many scenes, and these do exist, but the undramatic qualities of the tragedies predominate. The lack of internal cohesion, the absence of constructive dialogue (as opposed to stichomythic point-scoring), the long monologues, the declamatory extravagance of the language – none of these makes for good stage drama.

6. Chronology

An absolute date cannot be assigned to any of Seneca's tragedies. All that can be said with virtual certainty is that *Herc. Fur.* was written before AD 54 since *Apocol.* contains clear echoes of it.[181] Other snippets of external evidence, such as Quintilian's remark at *Inst.* 8.3.31 and Tacitus' observation at *Ann.* 14.52.3,[182] are inconclusive. Seneca

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[178] For the influence of post-Euripidean drama on Senecan dramatic technique, see Tarrant (1978), 217–18.

[179] A.D. Godley, 'Senecan Tragedy' in *English Literature and the Classics* (collected by G.S. Gordon) (Oxford, 1912), 231.

[180] Fantham, *Sen. Troad.* 48–9; A. Dihle, 'Seneca und die Aufführungspraxis der römischen Tragödie' A&A (1983), 162–71; also Peter J. Davis, *Shifting Song: the Chorus in Seneca's Tragedies* (Altertumswissenshaftliche Texte und Studien 26) (Hildesheim, 1993), 9–10. If Seneca had in mind the possibility that his plays might be recited or performed piecemeal, it may explain the much-criticised importance of the individual scene over the overall plan and development of the plot.

[181] See Fitch, 51–5. The apparent echoes of *Troad.* are not as telling, but there may be a reference to the *lusus Troiae* at *Troad.* 777–9 which would suggest a date of production before AD 54 (see Nisbet (1990), 96).

[182] Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.31 *nam memini iuvenis admodum inter Pomponianum ac Senecam etiam praefationibus esse tractatum an "gradus eliminat" in tragoedia dici oportuisset*; see Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 164–5, for a discussion of this passage. Tac. *Ann.* 14.52.3 *obiecebant . . . carmina crebrius factitare, postquam Neroni amor eorum venisset*; see Nisbet (1990), 97–8, who doubts that *carmina* refers to tragedies.

himself does not refer to the plays in his prose works. The internal evidence of historical and contemporary allusion is suggestive but uncertain. The facts and the arguments based on them have been discussed thoroughly elsewhere;[183] I have little to add to the general debate.

The significant study by Fitch (1981) suggests that *Phoen.* was Seneca's last play.[184] Fitch argues that a high incidence of sense-pauses occurring within the line indicates a poet's confidence in handling the metre; thus, the early plays would exhibit fewer mid-line sense-pauses, later plays more. This is true for the plays of Sophocles and Shakespeare. When the test is applied to Seneca, the plays fall into three groups: I. *Agam.* (32.4%), *Phaedr.* (34.4%), *Oedip.* (36.8%); II. *Med.* (47.2%), *Troad.* (47.6%), *Herc. Fur.* (49%); III. *Thyest.* (54.5%), *Phoen.* (57.2%). Fitch's secondary test, which corroborates these groupings is more convincing. He finds that the incidence of the shortening of final *-o* in certain categories of words,[185] an increasing tendency among poets during the first century AD, is significantly higher in *Thyest.* and *Phoen.* than in the other plays. Moreover, the frequency of this feature is so much greater in *Phoen.* than in *Thyest.* that it suggests that *Phoen.* was the last of Seneca's dramas. The fact that *Oedip.* and *Agam.* are the only plays which contain polymetric choruses is explicable in terms of Fitch's groupings as an early experiment in ambitious metrical schemes which Seneca later abandoned. The feature of dramatic technique whereby the chorus, at the end of an ode, makes a reference to something occurring on stage, as a transition to the next act, occurs for certain nine times in the Senecan *corpus*; these are not scattered throughout the plays – eight appear in *Agam.*, *Phaedr.*, and *Oedip.*,

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183 The best treatment is by Nisbet (1990), 95–114. All the commentaries in English deal with the subject: for the fullest treatment, see Fantham, *Sen. Troad.*, 9–14; more succinct is Tarrant's discussion in *Sen. Thyest.*, 10–13. For a summary of scholarly opinion prior to 1924, see Herrmann, *Théâtre*, 78–9.

184 R.G.M. Nisbet, 'The Oak and the Axe: Symbolism in Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus* 1618ff.' in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* ed. M. Whitby, P. Hardie, M. Whitby (Bristol, 1987), 249–51, defends the authenticity of the *Herc. Oet.*, which he dates to shortly before Seneca's death in AD 65; in his 1990 article, however, he acknowledges the 'inconvenient consequences' (109) of what he describes as Fitch's 'notable breakthrough' (101), since *Herc. Oet.* has only four instances (at most – two of these are in elision) of shortened *-o*.

185 Nisbet, 101, further refines these categories: he points out that final *-o* is normally shortened by Seneca in nouns or particles, and always in trisyllabic nominatives – thus evidence based on such words will be distorted by the frequency of usage of certain words in a particular play. More important, therefore, is the evidence col-

which suggests that this device was largely abandoned by Seneca after the writing of his early dramas.[186]

There are other reasons, too, for believing *Phoen.* to be Seneca's last play and assigning it a late date. One is its state of incompletion. While it is possible that the ending of the play was lost in transmission, it is hard to accept that the same is true of all the choral odes.[187] It seems likely that Seneca left the play unfinished, which makes *Phoen.* unique among the dramas. It differs from the other plays also in its structural peculiarities[188] and in Seneca's bold attempt to synthesise two strands of the legend.[189] This unparalleled adventurous manipulation of the mythological material in particular suggests that it was Seneca's last tragedy.

Nisbet ((1990), 108), arguing for a late date for *Phoen.*, observes: 'The theme of the aged Oedipus would suit an ageing Seneca, just as *Oedipus Coloneus* was thought to suit the venerable Sophocles'. He adds: 'The clash of brother against brother might have been a tactless subject when Nero was the rival of Britannicus, or soon after he had disposed of him'. Nisbet and Tarrant (*Sen. Thyest.*, 12–13) concur in dating *Thyest.* to the early 60's AD, with Nisbet pinpointing AD 62 as the likely year of its composition. This was the year of Seneca's withdrawal from the imperial court. It seems that, after his retirement, Seneca may have devoted himself to serious writing: the *Epistulae Morales*, the *Naturales Quaestiones*, and possibly the *Moralis Philosophia*, belong to the last three years of his life. It is likely, then, that *Phoen.* was composed in or after AD 62, with its completion perhaps being prevented by Seneca's personal and political crisis.

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lected by Fitch for the shortening of final *-o* in the first person singular of present and future verbs: *Agam.* 1, *Oedip.* 1, *Troad.* 2, *Phaedr.* 4, *Med.* 5, *Herc. Fur.* 5, *Thyest.* 18, *Phoen.* 27.

[186] Tarrant, *Sen. Thyest.*, 11 n.59. That *Oedip.* precedes *Phoen.* has been convincingly argued on other grounds also. Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 77) observed that *Phoen.* 176ff. refer back to the specific treatment by Seneca in *Oedip.* of the self-blinding; Zwierlein compares with this passage in *Phoen.*, *Oedip.* 952, 958, and 961. Zwierlein observes, further, that *nec ista morte contentus fui* (*Phoen.* 169) can only properly be understood in the context of *Oedip.* 949ff., where Oedipus expresses the desire for a prolonged death, dragged out in the noman's land between the dead and the living (*Proleg.*, 239). Herrmann, *Théâtre*, 100, claims, unconvincingly, that *Phoen.* antedates *Oedip.* 'dont les couleurs sont plus chargées'.

[187] See Intro., 9.

[188] See Intro., 1–2.

[189] See Intro., 16.

7. Text

The text is founded on Otto Zwierlein's OCT, from which I differ at the following points: 100, 112, 116, 117, 444, 448, 456, 551, 556, 648. I have also adjusted Zwierlein's punctuation in a few places, which are noted in the commentary. The purpose of this text is to provide a convenient reading text for users of the commentary. In the abbreviated *apparatus criticus*, I include textual variants and conjectures at points where I discuss the text in the commentary. I have not listed variants where the correct reading seemed obvious to me and did not appear to require discussion.

For a full discussion of the MS tradition of Seneca's tragedies, see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 23–94; Zwierlein, *Proleg.*, 7–181; A.P. Macgregor, *The Manuscripts of Seneca's Tragedies: A Handlist*, *ANRW* 2.32.2, 1134–1241.

Sigla used in apparatus and commentary

ω	codex archetypus (= EA)
E	Laurentianus Plut. 37.13 ('Etruscus'), saec. XI ex.
A	parens codicum δ et ß
δ	PT
P	Parisinus Lat. 8260, saec. XIII ante med.
T	Parisinus Lat. 8031, saec. XV in.
β	Cη
C	Cantabrigiensis Corpus Christi Coll. 406, saec. XIII in.
η	SV
S	Scorialensis T. III. II, saec. XIII (tert. quart. ut uid.)
V	Vaticanus Lat. 2829, saec. XIII ex.

L. ANNAEI SENECAE

PHOENISSAE

PERSONAE

Oedipus
Antigona
Nuntius
Iocasta
Satelles
Polynices
Eteocles

ACTUS PRIMUS

OEDIPUS – ANTIGONA

OEDIPVS

Caeci parentis regimen et fessi unicum
patris leuamen, nata, quam tanti est mihi
genuisse uel sic, desere infaustum patrem.
in recta quid deflectis errantem gradum?
permitte labi; melius inueniam uiam,
quam quaero, solus, quae me ab hac uita extrahat
et hoc nefandi capitis aspectu leuet
caelum atque terras. quantulum hac egi manu!
non uideo noxae conscium nostrae diem,
sed uideor. hinc iam solue inhaerentem manum
et patere caecum qua uolet ferri pedem.
Ibo, ibo qua praerupta protendit iuga
meus Cithaeron, qua peragrato celer
per saxa monte iacuit Actaeon suis
noua praeda canibus, qua per obscurum nemus
siluamque opacae uallis instinctas deo
egit sorores mater et gaudens malo
uibrante fixum praetulit thyrso caput;
uel qua cucurrit, corpus inuisum trahens,
Zethi iuuencus, qua per horrentes rubos
tauri ferocis sanguis ostentat fugas;
uel qua alta maria uertice inmenso premit
Inoa rupes, qua scelus fugiens nouum
nouumque faciens mater insiluit freto
mersura natum seque – felices quibus
fortuna melior tam bonas matres dedit.
Est alius istis noster in siluis locus,
qui me reposcit: hunc petam cursu incito;

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titulus PHOENISSAE *E* : THEBAIS *A* 2 patris ω : lateris *Gronouius* : fratris *Bothe* 23 nouum *Peiper* : suum ω : uiri *Gronouius* : ferum *Bothe*

non haesitabit gressus, huc omni duce
spoliatus ibo. quid moror sedes meas?
mortem, Cithaeron, redde et hospitium mihi
illud meum restitue, ut expirem senex
ubi debui infans. recipe supplicium uetus.
semper cruente saeue crudelis ferox,
cum occidis et cum parcis, olim iam tuum
est hoc cadauer: perage mandatum patris,
iam et matris. animus gestit antiqua exsequi
supplicia. quid me, nata, pestifero tenes
amore uinctum? quid tenes? genitor uocat.
sequor, sequor, iam parce – sanguineum gerens
insigne regni Laius rapti furit;
en ecce, inanes manibus infestis petit
foditque uultus. nata, genitorem uides?
ego uideo. Tandem spiritum inimicum expue,
desertor anime, fortis in partem tui.
omitte poenas languidas longae morae
mortemque totam recipe; quid segnis traho
quod uiuo? nullum facere iam possum scelus?
possum miser, praedico – discede a patre,
discede, uirgo. timeo post matrem omnia.

Antigona

Vis nulla, genitor, a tuo nostram manum
corpore resoluet, nemo me comitem tibi
eripiet umquam. Labdaci claram domum,
opulenta ferro regna germani petant –
pars summa magno patris e regno mea est,
pater ipse. non hunc auferet frater mihi
Thebana rapto sceptra qui regno tenet,
non hunc cateruas alter Argolicas agens;
non si reuulso Iuppiter mundo tonet
mediumque nostros fulmen in nexus cadat,

31 mortem *E* : mon- *A* 42 en *E (Zw. confert Oedip. 1004)* : et *A* 44 Ant. *praef. A, om. E* anime *A* : animae *E* : animi *Gronouius* 46 poenas . . . morae ω : poenae . . . moras *Grotius* 48 quod *Gronouius (Zw. confert 114)* : quid ω 56 hunc ω : hanc *Bentley* 58 hunc *E* : hic *A* : hanc *Bentley*

manum hanc remittam. prohibeas, genitor, licet:
regam abnuentem, derigam inuiti gradum.
in plana tendis? uado; praerupta appetis?
non obsto, sed praecedo; quo uis utere
duce me, duobus omnis eligitur uia:
perire sine me non potes, mecum potes.
hic alta rupes arduo surgit iugo
spectatque longe spatia subiecti maris:
uis hanc petamus? nudus hic pendet silex,
hic scissa tellus faucibus ruptis hiat:
uis hanc petamus? hic rapax torrens cadit
partesque lapsi montis exesas rotat:
in hunc ruamus? dum prior, quo uis eo.
non deprecor, non hortor. extingui cupis
uotumque, genitor, maximum mors est tibi?
si moreris, antecedo, si uiuis, sequor.
  Sed flecte mentem, pectus antiquum aduoca
uictasque magno robore aerumnas doma;
resiste: tantis in malis uinci mori est.
Oe. Unde in nefanda specimen egregium domo?
unde ista generi uirgo dissimilis suo?
Fortuna, cedis? aliquis est ex me pius?
non esset umquam, fata bene noui mea,
nisi ut noceret. ipsa se in leges nouas
natura uertet: regeret in fontem citas
reuolutus undas amnis et noctem afferet
Phoebea lampas, Hesperus faciet diem;
ut ad miserias aliquid accedat meas,
pii quoque erimus. unica Oedipodae est salus,
non esse saluum. liceat ulcisci patrem
adhuc inultum. dextra quid cessas iners
exigere poenas? quidquid exactum est adhuc,
matri dedisti. Mitte genitoris manum,
animosa uirgo: funus extendis meum
longasque uiui ducis exequias patris.
aliquando terra corpus inuisum tege;
peccas honesta mente, pietatem uocas
patrem insepultum trahere. qui cogit mori

---

63 appetis *E* : exp- *A*   79 mori *E* : malum *A*   82 cedis *v. Winterfeld* : cr- ω   85 uertet *A* : it *E*

nolentem in aequo est quique properantem impedit:
occidere est uetare cupientem mori.
nec tamen in aequo est: alterum grauius reor:
malo imperari quam eripi mortem mihi.
desiste coepto, uirgo: ius uitae ac necis
meae penes me est. regna deserui libens,
regnum mei retineo. si fida es comes,
ensem parenti trade, sed notum nece
ensem paterna. tradis? an gnati tenent
cum regno et illum? faciet, ubicumque est, opus.
ibi sit; relinquo. natus hunc habeat meus,
sed uterque. – flammas potius et uastum aggerem
compone; in altos ipse me immittam rogos
haerebo ad ignes, funebri abscondar strue
pectusque soluam durum et in cinerem dabo
hoc quidquid in me uiuit. – ubi saeuum est mare?
duc ubi sit altis prorutum saxis iugum,
ubi torua rapidus uoluat Ismenos uada,
duc ubi ferae sint, ubi fretum, ubi praeceps locus,
si dux es; illuc ire morituro placet,
ubi sedit alta rupe semifero dolos
Sphinx ore nectens. derige huc gressus pedum,
hic siste patrem. dira ne sedes uacet,
monstrum repone maius. hoc saxum insidens
obscura nostrae uerba fortunae loquar,
quae nemo soluat: quisquis Assyrio loca
possessa regi scindis et Cadmi nemus
serpente notum, sacra quo Dirce latet,
supplex adoras, quisquis Eurotan bibis
Spartenque fratre nobilem gemino colis,
quique Elin et Parnason et Boeotios
colonus agros uberis tondes soli:
aduerte mentem. saeua Thebarum lues
luctifica caecis uerba committens modis
quid simile posuit, quid tam inextricabile?

---

100 *del. Leo* 108 faciet . . . opus *E* : f. . . . scelus *A* : facinore . . . opus *Leo* 112 haerebo . . . funebri abscondar strue *Leo* : herebo . . . funebre escendam struem *E* : erectam . . . funebrem ascendam *A* : *del. Richter* 113 cinerem *E (Zw. confert Troad. 739)* : -es *A* 115 duc *E* : dic *A* 116 torua ω : torta *Lipsius* uoluat *Peiper* : ducat ω *(Zw. confert 604, Oedip. 469)* 117 *del. Heinsius* sint *A* : sunt *E*

aui gener patrisque riualis sui,
frater suorum liberum et fratrum parens;
uno auia partu liberos peperit uiro,
sibi et nepotes. monstra quis tanta explicet?
ego ipse, uictae spolia qui Sphingis tuli,
haerebo fati tardus interpres mei.
  Quid perdis ultra uerba? quid pectus ferum
mollire temptas precibus? hoc animo sedet
effundere hanc cum morte luctantem diu
animam et tenebras petere: nam sceleri haec meo
parum alta nox est: Tartaro condi iuuat,
et si quid ultra Tartarum est; tandem libet
quod olim oportet. morte prohiberi haud queo.
ferrum negabis? noxias lapsu uias
cludes et artis colla laqueis inseri
prohibebis? herbas quae ferunt letum auferes?
quid ista tandem cura proficiet tua?
ubique mors est. optume hoc cauit deus:
eripere uitam nemo non homini potest,
at nemo mortem; mille ad hanc aditus patent.
nil quaero: dextra noster et nuda solet
bene animus uti – dextra, nunc toto impetu,
toto dolore, uiribus totis ueni.
non destino unum uulneri nostro locum:
totus nocens sum: qua uoles mortem exige.
effringe pectus corque tot scelerum capax
euelle, totos uiscerum nuda sinus.
fractum incitatis ictibus guttur sonet
laceraeque fixis unguibus uenae fluant.
aut derige iras quo soles: haec uulnera
rescissa multo sanguine ac tabe inriga.
hac extrahe animam duram, inexpugnabilem.
  Et tu, parens, ubicumque poenarum arbiter
adstas mearum; non ego hoc tantum scelus
ulla expiari credidi poena satis
umquam, nec ista morte contentus fui,
nec me redemi parte: membratim tibi
perire uolui – debitum tandem exige.

---

137 explicet *A* *(Zw. confert Herc. Fur. 258, Thyest. 684)* : -at *E*
149 ferunt ω : -ant *Heinsius* 159 pectus *Heinsius* : corpus ω
169 morte ω : nocte *Gronouius* 171 perire uolui *E* : u. p. *A*

nunc soluo poenas, tunc tibi inferias dedi.
ades atque inertem dexteram introrsus preme
magisque merge: timida tunc paruo caput
libauit haustu uixque cupientes sequi
eduxit oculos. haeret etiamnunc mihi
ille animus, haeret, cum recusantem manum
pressere uultus. audies uerum, Oedipu:
minus eruisti lumina audacter tua,
quam praestitisti. nunc manum cerebro indue:
hac parte mortem perage qua coepi mori.
An. Pauca, o parens magnanime, miserandae precor
ut uerba natae mente placata audias.
non te ut reducam ueteris ad speciem domus
habitumque regni flore pollentem inclito
peto aut ut iras, temporum haut ipsa mora
fractas, remisso pectore ac placido feras:
at hoc decebat roboris tanti uirum,
non esse sub dolore nec uictum malis
dare terga; non est, ut putas, uirtus, pater,
timere uitam, sed malis ingentibus
obstare nec se uertere ac retro dare.
qui fata proculcauit ac uitae bona
proiecit atque abscidit et casus suos
onerauit ipse, cui deo nullo est opus,
quare ille mortem cupiat aut quare petat?
utrumque timidi est: nemo contempsit mori
qui concupiuit. cuius haut ultra mala
exire possunt, in loco tuto est situs.
quis iam deorum, uelle fac, quicquam potest
malis tuis adicere? iam nec tu potes
nisi hoc, ut esse te putes dignum nece –
non es nec ulla pectus hoc culpa attigit.
et hoc magis te, genitor, insontem uoca,
quod innocens es dis quoque inuitis. quid est
quod te efferarit, quod nouos suffixerit
stimulos dolori? quid te in infernas agit
sedes, quid ex his pellit? ut careas die?

---

174 tunc *Leo* : tum ω 178 edippu δ : -um *E*β : Oedipus *Schmidt* 188 at *Richter* : et ω 196 cupiat ω : fugiat *Lipsius* 205 inuitis *E* : -sis *A*

cares; ut altis nobilem muris domum
patriamque fugias? patria tibi uiuo perit;
natos fugis matremque? ab aspectu omnium
fortuna te summouit, et quidquid potest
auferre cuiquam mors, tibi hoc uita abstulit;
regni tumultus? turba fortunae prior
abscessit a te iussa. quem, genitor, fugis?
OE. Me fugio, fugio conscium scelerum omnium
pectus, manumque hanc fugio et hoc caelum et deos
et dira fugio scelera quae feci innocens.
ego hoc solum, frugifera quo surgit Ceres,
premo? has ego auras ore pestifero traho?
ego laticis haustu satior aut ullo fruor
almae parentis munere? ego castam manum
nefandus incestificus exsecrabilis
attrecto? ego ullos aure concipio sonos,
per quos parentis nomen aut nati audiam?
utinam quidem rescindere has quirem uias
manibusque adactis omne qua uoces meant
aditusque uerbis tramite angusto patet
eruere possem: nata, iam sensum tui,
quae pars meorum es criminum, infelix pater
fugissem. inhaeret ac recrudescit nefas
subinde, et aures ingerunt quidquid mihi
donastis, oculi. cur caput tenebris graue
non mitto ad umbras Ditis aeternas? quid hic
manes meos detineo? quid terram grauo
mixtusque superis erro? quid restat mali?
regnum parentes liberi, uirtus quoque
et ingeni sollertis eximium decus
periere, cuncta sors mihi infesta abstulit;
lacrimae supererant: has quoque eripui mihi.
  Absiste: nullas animus admittit preces
nouamque poenam sceleribus quaerit parem.
et esse par quae poterit? infanti quoque
decreta mors est. fata quis tam tristia
sortitus umquam? uideram nondum diem

---

218 innocens *E* : nocens *A* *uersum del Wilamowitz* 230 es cr. *Lipsius*: est cr. *E* : cr. es *A* 233 donastis *E* : nega- (lega- δ) *A* 234 eternas *A* : -ni *E* 240 eripui *A* : -it *E*

uterique nondum solueram clausi moras,
et iam timebar. protinus quosdam editos
nox occupauit et nouae luci abstulit:
mors me antecessit; aliquis intra uiscera
materna letum praecoquis fati tulit:
sed numquid et peccauit? abstrusum, abditum
dubiumque an essem sceleris infandi reum
deus egit; illo teste damnauit parens
calidoque teneros transuit ferro pedes
et in alta nemora pabulum misit feris
auibusque saeuis quas Cithaeron noxius
cruore saepe regio tinctas alit.
sed quem deus damnauit, abiecit pater,
mors quoque refugit. praestiti Delphis fidem:
genitorem adortus impia straui nece.
hoc alia pietas redimet: occidi patrem,
sed matrem amaui. proloqui hymenaeum pudet
taedasque nostras? has quoque inuitum pati
te coge poenas: facinus ignotum efferum
inusitatum fare quod populi horreant,
quod esse factum nulla non aetas neget,
quod parricidam pudeat: in patrios toros
tuli paterno sanguine aspersas manus
scelerisque pretium maius accepi scelus.
leue est paternum facinus: in thalamos meos
deducta mater, ne parum sceleris foret,
fecunda: nullum crimen hoc maius potest
natura ferre. si quod etiamnum est tamen,
qui facere possent dedimus. abieci necis
pretium paternae sceptrum et hoc iterum manus
armauit alias; optime regni mei
fatum ipse noui: nemo sine sacro feret
illud cruore. magna praesagit mala
paternus animus. iacta iam sunt semina
cladis futurae: spernitur pacti fides;
hic occupato cedere imperio negat,
ius ille et icti foederis testes deos
inuocat et Argos exul atque urbes mouet

---

254 transuit *E* : transtulit *A*   279 iam sunt *E* : sunt iam *A*

Graias in arma: non leuis fessis uenit
ruina Thebis; tela flammae uulnera
instant et istis si quod est maius malum,
ut esse genitos nemo non ex me sciat.
An. Si nulla, genitor, causa uiuendi tibi est,
haec una abunde est, ut pater natos regas
grauiter furentes. tu impii belli minas
auertere unus tuque uecordes potes
inhibere iuuenes, ciuibus pacem dare,
patriae quietem, foederi laeso fidem.
uitam tibi ipse si negas, multis negas.
Oe. Illis parentis ullus aut aequi est amor,
auidis cruoris imperi armorum doli,
diris, scelestis, breuiter ut dicam, meis?
certant in omne facinus et pensi nihil
ducunt, ubi illos ira praecipites agit,
nefasque nullum per nefas nati putant.
non patris illos tangit afflicti pudor,
non patria: regno pectus attonitum furit.
scio quo ferantur, quanta moliri parent,
ideoque leti quaero maturi uiam
morique propero, dum in domo nemo est mea
nocentior me. Nata, quid genibus meis
fles aduoluta? quid prece indomitum domas?
unum hoc habet fortuna quo possim capi,
inuictus aliis: sola tu affectus potes
mollire duros, sola pietatem in domo
docere nostra. nil graue aut miserum est mihi
quod te sciam uoluisse; tu tantum impera:
hic Oedipus Aegaea transnabit freta
iubente te, flammasque quas Siculo uomit
de monte tellus igneos uoluens globos
excipiet ore seque serpenti offeret,
quae saeua furto nemoris Herculeo furit;
iubente te praebebit alitibus iecur,
iubente te uel uiuet.

---

299 illos ω : ipsos *Leo* agit *E* : -at *A* 304 maturi *A* : -am *E*
315 uoluens *recc.* *(Zw. confert Verg. Georg. 1.473)* : sol- ω

ACTUS SECUNDUS

NUNTIUS – OEDIPUS

NUNTIUS

Exemplum in ingens regia stirpe editum
Thebae pauentes arma fraterna inuocant
rogantque tectis arceas patriis faces.
non sunt minae, iam propius accessit malum.
nam regna repetens frater et pactas uices
in bella cunctos Graeciae populos agit;
septena muros castra Thebanos premunt.
succurre, prohibe pariter et bellum et scelus.

OEDIPVS

Ego ille sum qui scelera committi uetem
et abstineri sanguine a caro manus
doceam? magister iuris et amoris pii
ego sum? meorum facinorum exempla appetunt,
me nunc secuntur; laudo et agnosco libens,
exhortor, aliquid ut patre hoc dignum gerant.
agite, o propago clara, generosam indolem
probate factis, gloriam ac laudes meas
superate et aliquid facite propter quod patrem
adhuc iuuet uixisse. facietis, scio:
sic estis orti. scelere defungi haut leui,
haut usitato tanta nobilitas potest.
ferte arma, facibus petite penetrales deos
frugemque flamma metite natalis soli,
miscete cuncta, rapite in exitium omnia,

---

ante 320 Nuncius. edipus. antigone *A* : *tit. om. E* 320 ANT. *praef. E* : *om. A* exemplum in ingens *Lipsius* : exemplum ingens *E* : *om. A* editum *E* : -e *A* 327 scelus *E* : nefas *A* 331 facinorum exempla *E* : e.f. *A* 334 clara *A*: cara *E*

disicite passim moenia, in planum date,
templis deos obruite, maculatos lares
conflate, ab imo tota considat domus;
urbs concremetur – primus a thalamis meis
incipiat ignis. **Nvn.** Mitte uiolentum impetum
doloris ac te publica exorent mala
auctorque placidae liberis pacis ueni.
Oe. Vides modestae deditum menti senem
placidaeque amantem pacis ad partes uocas?
tumet animus ira, feruet immensum dolor,
maiusque quam quod casus et iuuenum furor
conatur aliquid cupio. non satis est adhuc
ciuile bellum: frater in fratrem ruat.
nec hoc sat est: quod debet, ut fiat nefas
de more nostro, quod meos deceat toros:
date arma matri – nemo me ex his eruat
siluis: latebo rupis exesae cauo
aut saepe densa corpus abstrusum tegam.
hinc aucupabor uerba rumoris uagi
et saeua fratrum bella, quod possum, audiam.

ACTUS TERTIUS

IOCASTA – SATELLES – ANTIGONA

Iocasta

Felix Agaue: facinus horrendum manu,
qua fecerat, gestauit et spolium tulit
cruenta nati maenas in partes dati;
fecit scelus, sed misera non ultra suo
sceleri occucurrit. hoc leue est quod sum nocens:
feci nocentes. hoc quoque etiamnunc leue est:
peperi nocentes. derat aerumnis meis,

347[b]–349 nuntio attribuit M. Mueller 1901, 263–4 : *Antigonae dat* ω   358 matri *cod. Orator., Gronouius* : patri ω   *ante 363* IOCASTA. SATELLES. POLINICES. ETHEOCLES *E* : *om. A*   366–7 ultra suo/ sceleri occurrit (occucurrit *Gronouius) E* : ultra suum/

ut et hostem amarem. bruma ter posuit niues
et tertia iam falce decubuit Ceres,
ut exul errat natus et patria caret
profugusque regum auxilia Graiorum rogat.
gener est Adrasti, cuius imperio mare
quod scindit Isthmos regitur; hic gentes suas
septemque secum regna ad auxilium trahit
generi – quid optem quidue decernam haut scio.
regnum reposcit: causa repetentis bona est,
mala sic petentis. uota quae faciam parens?
utrimque natum uideo: nil possum pie
pietate salua facere: quodcumque alteri
optabo nato fiet alterius malo.
sed utrumque quamuis diligam affectu pari,
quo causa melior sorsque deterior trahit
inclinat animus semper infirmo fauens:
miseros magis fortuna conciliat suis.

SATELLES

Regina, dum tu flebiles questus cies
terisque tempus, saeua nudatis stetit
acies in armis; aera iam bellum cient
aquilaque pugnam signifer mota uocat.
septena reges bella dispositi parant,
animo pari Cadmea progenies subit,
cursu citato miles hinc atque hinc ruit.
uide ut atra nubes puluere abscondat diem
fumoque similes campus in caelum erigat
nebulas, equestri fracta quas tellus pede
summittit. et, si uera metuentes uident,
infesta fulgent signa, subrectis adest
frons prima telis, aurea clarum nota
nomen ducum uexilla praescriptum ferunt.

---

scelus hoc cucurrit *A* 375 scindit ('*uel aeque bene* findit') Isthmos *Gronouius* : cingit isthomos *E* : cingit Isthmon *A* 377 generi *A* : -o *E* 380 utrimque *Bentley* : utrum- ω 387 SAT. *E* : nun. *A* 388 saeua *Gronouius* : salua *E* : tota *A* stetit *A* : adest *E* 394 uide ut *(Zw. confert Troad. 945) A* : uiden ut *E* abscondat *A* : -it

I, redde amorem fratribus, pacem omnibus,
et impia arma matris opposittu impedi.

Antigona

Perge, o parens, et concita celerem gradum,
compesce tela, fratribus ferrum excute,
nudum inter enses pectus infestos tene:
aut solue bellum, mater, aut prima excipe.
Ioc. Ibo, ibo et armis obuium opponam caput,
stabo inter arma; petere qui fratrem uolet,
petat ante matrem. tela, qui fuerit pius,
rogante ponat matre; qui non est pius
incipiat a me. feruidos iuuenes anus
tenebo, nullum teste me fiet nefas;
aut si aliquod et me teste committi potest,
non fiet unum. **An.** Signa collatis micant
uicina signis, clamor hostilis fremit,
scelus in propinquo est: occupa, mater, preces.
et ecce motos fletibus credas meis,
sic agmen armis segne compositis uenit.
Sat. Procedit acies tarda, sed properant duces.
Ioc. Quis me procellae turbine insanae uehens
uolucer per auras uentus aetherias aget?
quae Sphinx uel atra nube subtexens diem
Stymphalis auidis praepetem pinnis feret?
aut quae per altas aeris rapiet uias
Harpyia saeui regis obseruans famem
et inter acies proiciet raptam duas?
Sat. Vadit furenti similis aut etiam furit.
sagitta qualis Parthica uelox manu
excussa fertur, qualis insano ratis
premente uento rapitur aut qualis cadit
delapsa caelo stella, cum stringens polum
rectam citatis ignibus rumpit uiam,
attonita cursu fugit et binas statim

E ante 403 Antigone. iocasta. nuncius *A* : *om.* *E* 403 et concita *A* : perge et concita cursu *E* 420 insane *A* : -o *E*

diduxit acies. uicta materna prece
haesere bella, iamque in alternam necem
illinc et hinc miscere cupientes manus
librata dextra tela suspensa tenent.
paci fauetur, omnium ferrum latet
cessatque tectum – uibrat in fratrum manu.
laniata canas mater ostendit comas,
rogat abnuentis, irrigat fletu genas.
negare matri, qui diu dubitat, potest.

ACTUS QUARTUS

JOCASTA – POLYNEICES – ETEOCLES

Iocasta

In me arma et ignes uertite, in me omnis ruat
una iuuentus quaeque ab Inachio uenit
animosa muro quaeque Thebana ferox
descendit arce: ciuis atque hostis simul
[hunc petite uentrem, qui dedit fratres uiro]
mea membra passim spargite ac diuellite:
ego utrumque peperi – ponitis ferrum ocius?
an dico et ex quo? dexteras matri date,
date dum piae sunt. error inuitos adhuc
fecit nocentes, omne Fortunae fuit
peccantis in nos crimen: hoc primum nefas
inter scientes geritur. in uestra manu est,
utrum uelitis: sancta si pietas placet,
donate matrem pace; si placuit scelus,
maius paratum est: media se opponit parens.
proinde bellum tollite aut belli moram.
Sollicita cui nunc mater alterna prece

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436 manus *E* : -um *A* 437 librata *Heinsius* : ui- ω 438 latet *A* : iacet *E* 439 tectum *E* : telum *A* *ante* 443 Iocasta. polinices *A*: *om. E* 444 una *A* : unam *E* 447 *del. Ax.* 448 mea *A* : haec *E* 456 donate matrem pace *Auantius* : d. matri pacem ω : d. matri bella *Gronouius* : domate Martem pace M. Mueller 459 sollicita cui nunc *recc.* : c. n. s. *E* : c. s. n. *A*

uerba admouebo? misera quem amplectar prius?
in utramque partem ducor affectu pari.
hic afuit; sed pacta si fratrum ualent,
nunc alter aberit. ergo iam numquam duos
nisi sic uidebo? iunge complexus prior,
qui tot labores totque perpessus mala
longo parentem fessus exilio uides.
accede propius, clude uagina impium
ensem et trementem iamque cupientem excuti
hastam solo defige; maternum tuo
coire pectus pectori clipeus uetat:
hunc quoque repone. uinculo frontem exue
tegumenque capitis triste belligeri leua
et ora matri redde – quo uultus refers
acieque pauida fratris obseruas manum?
affusa totum corpus amplexu tegam,
tuo cruori per meum fiet uia.
quid dubius haeres? an times matris fidem?

POLYNICES

Timeo: nihil iam iura naturae ualent.
post ista fratrum exempla ne matri quidem
fides habenda est. **IOC.** Redde iam capulo manum,
astringe galeam, laeua se clipeo inserat;
dum frater exarmatur, armatus mane.
Tu pone ferrum, causa qui ferri es prior.
si pacis odium est, furere si bello placet,
indutias te mater exiguas rogat,
ferat ut reuerso post fugam nato oscula
uel prima uel suprema. dum pacem peto,
audite inermes. ille te, tu illum times?
ego utrumque, sed pro utroque. quid strictum abnuis
recondere ensem? qualibet gaude mora:
id gerere bellum cupitis, in quo est optimum
uinci. uereris fratris infesti dolos?

---

post 477 *legitur* 480 *in E*   481 inserat *E* : inf- δ : ing- β

quotiens necesse est fallere aut falli a suis,
patiare potius ipse quam facias scelus.
sed ne uerere: mater insidias et hinc
et rursus illinc abiget. exoro? an patri
inuideo uestro? ueni ut arcerem nefas
an ut uiderem propius? – hic ferrum abdidit,
reclinis hastae parma defixae incubat:
ad te preces nunc, nate, maternas feram,
sed ante lacrimas. teneo longo tempore
petita uotis ora. te profugum solo
patrio penates regis externi tegunt,
te maria tot diuersa, tot casus uagum
egere, non te duxit in thalamos parens
comitata primos nec sua festas manu
ornauit aedes nec sacra laetas faces
uitta reuinxit; dona non auro graues
gazas socer, non arua, non urbes dedit:
dotale bellum est. hostium es factus gener,
patria remotus, hospes alieni laris,
externa consecutus, expulsus tuis,
sine crimine exul. ne quid e fatis tibi
desset paternis, hoc quoque ex illis habes,
errasse thalamis. Nate post multos mihi
remisse soles, nate suspensae metus
et spes parentis, cuius aspectum deos
semper rogaui, cum tuus reditus mihi
tantum esset erepturus, aduentu tuo
quantum daturus: 'quando pro te desinam'
dixi 'timere?'; dixit inridens deus:
'ipsum timebis.' nempe nisi bellum foret,
ego te carerem; nempe si tu non fores,
bello carerem. triste conspectus datur
pretium tui durumque, sed matri placet.
  Hinc modo recedant arma, dum nullum nefas
Mars saeuus audet: hoc quoque est magnum nefas,

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498 hic | *sc.* Et. 499 reclinis *E* : -uis *A* hastae parma defixae incubat *Morel* : hastae arma (h. et arma *A*) -xa -ant ω
507 sacra *Leo* : sua ω laetas faces *in ras. ex* festas manus *E*
598 auro *E* : auro et *A* 509 gazas *A* : galeas *E* arua *recc.* : arma ω 516 suspensae *E* : sollicite *A*

tam prope fuisse. stupeo et exanguis tremo,
cum stare fratres hinc et hinc uideo duos
sceleris sub ictu; membra quassantur metu:
quam paene mater maius aspexi nefas,
quam quod miser uidere non potuit pater.
licet timore facinoris tanti uacem
uideamque iam nil tale, sum infelix tamen
quod paene uidi. per decem mensum graues
uteri labores perque pietatem inclitae
precor sororis et per irati sibi
genas parentis, scelere quas nullo nocens,
erroris a se dura supplicia exigens,
hausit: nefandas moenibus patriis faces
auerte, signa bellici retro agminis
flecte – ut recedas, magna pars sceleris tamen
uestri peracta est: uidit hostili grege
campos repleri patria, fulgentes procul
armis cateruas uidit, equitatu leui
Cadmea frangi prata et excelsos rotis
uolitare proceres, igne flagrantes trabes
fumare, cineri quae petunt nostras domos,
fratresque (facinus quod nouum et Thebis fuit)
in se ruentes: totus hoc exercitus,
hoc populus omnis, uestraque hoc uidit soror
genetrixque uidi: nam pater debet sibi
quod ista non spectauit. Occurrat tibi
nunc Oedipus, quo iudice erroris quoque
poenae petuntur. ne, precor, ferro erue
patriam ac penates neue, quas regere expetis,
euerte Thebas. quis tenet mentem furor?
petendo patriam perdis? ut fiat tua,
uis esse nullam? quin tuae causae nocet
ipsum hoc quod armis uris infestis solum
segetesque adultas sternis et totos fugam
edis per agros: nemo sic uastat sua;
quae corripi igne, quae meti gladio iubes

536–7 pietatem inclitae ... sororis *E* : -e -as ... -es *A* 551 hoc pop. *E* : et pop. *A* utramque *E* : et utraque *A* : utraque *Peiper* 552 uidi *recc.* (*Jac. Gronouius*) : -it ω 561 adultas *E* : adus- *A*

aliena credis. rex sit ex uobis uter,
manente regno quaerite. haec telis petes
flammisque tecta? poteris has Amphionis
quassare moles? nulla quas struxit manus
stridente tardum machina ducens onus,
sed conuocatus uocis et citharae sono
per se ipse summas uenit in turres lapis:
haec saxa franges uictor? hinc spolia auferes
uinctosque duces patris aequales tui,
matresque ab ipso coniugum raptas sinu
saeuus catena miles imposita trahet?
adulta uirgo, mixta captiuo gregi,
Thebana nuribus munus Argolicis eat?
an et ipsa, palmas uincta postergum datas,
mater triumphi praeda fraterni uehar?
potesne ciues leto et exitio datos
uidere passim? moenibus caris potes
hostem admouere, sanguine et flamma potes
implere Thebas? tam ferus durum geris
saeuumque in iras pectus? et nondum imperas.
quid sceptra facient? pone uesanos, precor,
animi tumores teque pietati refer.
Pol. Ut profugus errem semper? ut patria arcear
opemque gentis hospes externae sequar?
quid paterer aliud, si fefellissem fidem?
si peierassem? fraudis alienae dabo
poenas, at ille praemium scelerum feret?
iubes abire? matris imperio obsequor –
da quo reuertar. regia frater meus
habitet superba, parua me abscondat casa.
hanc da repulso; liceat exiguo lare
pensare regnum. coniugi donum datus
arbitria thalami dura felicis feram
humilisque socerum lixa dominantem sequar?
in seruitutem cadere de regno graue est.
Ioc. Si regna quaeris nec potest sceptro manus
uacare saeuo, multa quae possint peti

565 petes *A* : -is *E* 572 uinctosque *ET* : uic- β*P*
582 ferus *E* : -um et *A* 592 meus *E* : mea *A* 593 habitet *A*: -at *E* 594 da *A* : dare *E* : date *Leo*

in orbe toto quaelibet tellus dabit:
hinc nota Baccho Tmolus attollit iuga,
qua lata terris spatia frugiferis iacent
et qua trahens opulenta Pactolus uada
inundat auro rura, nec laetis minus
Maeandros aruis flectit errantes aquas
rapidusque campos fertiles Hermus secat;
hinc grata Cereri Gargara et diues solum
quod Xanthus ambit niuibus Idaeis tumens;
hinc qua relinquit nomen Ionii mare
faucesque Abydo Sestos opposita premit,
aut qua latus iam propius orienti dedit
tutamque crebris portibus Lyciam uidet,
hac regna ferro quaere, in hos populos ferat
socer arma fortis, has tuo sceptro paret
tradatque gentes – hoc adhuc regnum puta
tenere patrem. Melius exilium est tibi
quam reditus iste: crimine alieno exulas,
tuo redibis. melius istis uiribus
noua regna nullo scelere maculata appetes.
quin ipse frater arma comitatus tua
tibi militabit. uade et id bellum gere
in quo pater materque pugnanti tibi
fauere possint. regna cum scelere omnibus
sunt exilis grauiora. Nunc belli mala
propone, dubias Martis incerti uices:
licet omne tecum Graeciae robur trahas,
licet arma longe miles ac late explicet,
fortuna belli semper ancipiti in loco est.
quodcumque Mars decernit: exaequat duos,
licet impares sint, gladius; et spes et metus
Fors caeca uersat. praemium incertum petis,
certum scelus. Fauisse fac uotis deos
omnes tuis: cessere et auersi fugam
petiere ciues, clade funesta iacens
obtexit agros miles – exultes licet

602 nota *A* : tota *E* 603 iacent ω : patent *Zw. (1980)* 607 Hermus *Gronouius* : hebrus ω 610 mare *Bentley* : -is ω 612 propius *Gronouius* : -ior ω 614 hac *Bothe* : haec ω : hic *Gronouius* 615 tuo sceptro paret *E* : p. s. t. *A* 631 gladius *A* : -io *E* 632 Fors *Ascensius (Zw. confert Verg. ecl. 9.5)* : sors ω

uictorque fratris spolia deiecti geras:
frangenda palma est. quale tu hoc bellum putas,
in quo execrandum uictor admittit nefas,
si gaudet? hunc quem uincere infelix cupis,
cum uiceris, lugebis. infaustas age
dimitte pugnas, libera patriam metu,
luctu parentes. **Pol.** Sceleris et fraudis suae
poenas nefandus frater ut nullas ferat?
Ioc. Ne metue. poenas et quidem soluet graues:
regnabit. est haec poena. si dubitas, auo
patrique crede: Cadmus hoc dicet tibi
Cadmique proles. sceptra Thebano fuit
impune nulli gerere – nec quisquam fide
rupta tenebat illa: iam numeres licet
fratrem inter istos.

Eteocles

Numeret, est tanti mihi
cum regibus iacere. te turbae exulum
ascribo. **Ioc.** Regna, dummodo inuisus tuis.
Et. Regnare non uult, esse qui inuisus timet:
simul ista mundi conditor posuit deus,
odium atque regnum: regis hoc magni reor,
odia ipsa premere. multa dominantem uetat
amor suorum; plus in iratos licet.
qui uult amari, languida regnat manu.
Ioc. Inuisa numquam imperia retinentur diu.
Et. Praecepta melius imperi reges dabunt;
exilia tu compone. pro regno uelim –
Ioc. Patriam penates coniugem flammis dare?
Et. Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene.

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638 hoc *E* : id *A* 646 est haec p. ω : Pol. haec est p.? *recc.* : Pol. haecne est p.? *Scriuerius* 648 Thebano ω : Thebarum *Ascensius* 650 tenebat *A* : -it *E* 651[b] ET. Numeret *Schmidt* : POL. numero et ω : POL. Numero. ET. *Birt* 652[b] *nulla personae nota in E* : Io. *praef. A* 653 *uerba* regna . . . tuis *Iocastae dat* ω, *Polynici Grotius* 654 ET. *Grotius* : POL. ω 656 hoc *E* : et *A* 657 ipsa *E* : ista *A* 661–2 *Eteocli ascripsit Grotius, Polynici E, nulla personae nota in A, sed 662[b] Polynici attribuitur in βT* 662 compone *Ax.* : oppone *E* : disp- *A* 663 IOC. *E* : *om. A* 664 ET. *Grotius* : POL. *E* : *om. A*

SYNOPSIS

Act 1 (1–319): Oedipus, Antigone, on or near Cithaeron

1–50 Oedipus wishes to die on Cithaeron as he should have as an infant. He seems to see Laius threatening him, and, fearing that he (Oedipus) will commit incest with Antigone, he orders her to leave him.

51–79 Antigone asserts her devotion to Oedipus and declares that she will follow him wherever he goes, even to death. She urges her father to have courage and not to be overcome by his troubles.

80–181 Oedipus wonders how he came to produce a daughter as good as Antigone. This leads him back to his own sinfulness and his desire for death (80–110). He considers various means and places of suicide, culminating with the rock once occupied by the Sphinx, whose riddle his own genetic tangle rivals (110–39). He tells Antigone not to try to dissuade him from death and again considers possible means of suicide. He decides that he should use his own right hand again against himself, thrusting it through his empty eye-sockets and into his brain (140–81).

182–215 Antigone tries to persuade Oedipus that a man as courageous as he should not yield to suffering. She says that he is innocent of the crimes he committed, and asks him why he is so eager to die and whom it is that he is trying to escape.

216–87 Oedipus replies that he is fleeing his own pollution. He sees himself as having been doomed from his mother's womb and goes on to tell the story of his exposure, his parricide, and his incest (216–69). The latter he declares to be the greatest possible crime against nature. He believes, however, that if there are worse crimes, his sons are capable of them. Oedipus outlines the situation existing between the brothers – how Eteocles will not give up the throne to Polyneices as agreed – and foresees the destruction coming upon Thebes at the hands of Polyneices' army (270–87).

288–94 Antigone begs Oedipus to carry on living, if only to restrain his sons from war.

295–319 Oedipus refuses, but, when Antigone falls weeping before him, he capitulates and agrees to continue living.

Act 2 (320–62): Nuntius, Oedipus

320–7 On behalf of the Theban citizens, the Nuntius formally petitions Oedipus to intervene between the brothers since Polyneices' forces are camped outside the walls of Thebes.

328–47 Oedipus' response is to exult in the wrongdoing of his sons, whom he sees as following his own example.

347–9 The Nuntius again urges Oedipus to go to his sons as a peace-maker.

350–62 Oedipus expresses the wish that the brothers *do* attack each other. He says that he will hide in the woods and catch whatever reports of the war come his way.

Act 3 (363–442): Jocasta, Satelles, Antigone, on the battlements of Thebes

363–86 Jocasta laments that her sinful marriage has produced sinful sons. She is torn between them, recognising that Polyneices' claim to the throne is legitimate, but deploring his plan to regain it by force.

387–402 The Satelles reproaches Jocasta for wasting time when the battle is about to begin and urges her to go to reconcile the brothers.

403–6 Antigone also urges Jocasta on, telling her to place herself between the brothers' drawn swords.

407–14 Jocasta agrees to go and says that, if her sons are determined to kill each other, they will have to kill her first.

414–26 Antigone and the Satelles comment on events on the battlefield as Jocasta hurries away.

427–42 The Satelles describes Jocasta's arrival between the two lines of battle and her pleading with her sons.

Act 4 (443–664): Jocasta, Polyneices, Eteocles, on the battlefield before Thebes

443–77 Jocasta urges her sons to lay down their arms or kill her. She tells Polyneices to disarm so that she can embrace him. She promises that she will protect him from Eteocles with her own body, and asks why he still hesitates and whether he does not trust her.

478–80 Polyneices replies that his brother's treachery has made him unwilling to trust even his own mother.

480–585 Jocasta persuades Eteocles to lower his weapons and turns again to Polyneices, whose exile and foreign marriage she laments (480–515). She pleads with him not to attack his own brother and destroy his own city, and urges him to withdraw from the battle (515–85).

586–98 Polyneices points out the unfairness of his impoverished situation as compared with Eteocles' wealth and power.

599–643 Jocasta says that if Polyneices is determined on a throne he should seek it elsewhere, since to capture Thebes in war would be a great crime.

643–64 Polyneices points out the Eteocles will then receive no punishment for his crime (643–4). Jocasta replies that being king of Thebes will be sufficient punishment in view of the history of the race of Cadmus, and that no-one who has broken faith has ever been able to retain the throne. She tells Polyneices to regard Eteocles as one of these (644–51). Eteocles retorts that it is worth it to lie with kings and sends Polyneices into exile (651–3). Jocasta warns Eteocles that his people will hate him and that a hated king will lose his throne. Eteocles declares that kingship and hatred belong together and that sovereignty is worth having at any price (653–64).

COMMENTARY

Act 1 (1–319)

1–50 The main theme of this first act (on the division into acts, see Intro., 2) is suicide, on which Oedipus is determined and from which Antigone, with eventual and unexpected success, tries to dissuade him. The debate between father and daughter is static and declamatory, but Seneca infuses it with dramatic interest through his gradual introduction of the second theme of the play, which dominates from 363 onward – the conflict between Eteocles and Polyneices. At first it is not clear why Oedipus has been plunged again, after some time, into the anguished guilt and despair which gripped him when he first became aware of his true identity; thus the very intensity of his *furor* generates dramatic interest as we wait to discover its cause. Seneca exploits this suspense to its fullest, initially merely mentioning the quarrel of the brothers without associating it with Oedipus' death wish (53–8), then alluding to it briefly once more, this time in the context of Oedipus' desire for death but again without making the connection explicit (108–10), and finally giving the power struggle between the brothers as the cause of Oedipus' impulse to suicide only at 273–306 (see further commentary *ad loc.*).

Neither Oedipus nor Antigone (nor any other character in the play) is identified by name on first entrance (see Sutton, 57), but the opening verses (1–2) give clear pointers as to who they are: the mention of a blind father whose sole support is his daughter could only apply to Oedipus and Antigone. Any lingering doubts as to the identity of the first speaker would certainly be dispelled by line 33, by which point mention has been made of the blind man's sense of pollution (*infaustum* 3, *nefandi* 7, *noxae nostrae* 9) and of the fact that he should have died on Cithaeron as a baby (31–3). Cf. the prologue of *Phaedr.*, where Hippolytus likewise is not explicitly identified, although the tone and content of his speech make his identity clear. On the prologue nature of this act, see Intro., 13–16.

In the first speech of Oedipus, his desire for death is introduced almost immediately (4–7). From the passive surrender to his fate expressed in 11 (*patere caecum qua uolet ferri pedem*) Oedipus moves suddenly in 12 to a frenzied desire to seek death actively. The abrupt shift in mood and tone, characteristic of the declamatory style, is heralded by *ibo, ibo* (the immediate repetition of a verb occurs frequently in Senecan drama: in *Phoen.*, cf. 40 *sequor, sequor* and 407 *ibo, ibo*, and see Canter, 156–7, for examples in the other dramas). The

impression of Oedipus' eagerness to rush to his death is reinforced by words denoting speed and action: *celer* 13, *egit* 17, *cucurrit* 19, *fugas* 21, *fugiens* 23, *insiluit* 24.

12–26 are carefully constructed: the tricolon *qua . . . qua . . . qua* (12, 13, 15) is followed by two *exempla* introduced by *uel qua* (19, 22), each containing an internal *qua* clause (20, 23). The characteristically Senecan piling up of examples, which here serves to place Oedipus' *furor* in the context of the violent history of the house of Thebes, culminates in the outburst: *felices quibus/ fortuna melior tam bonas matres dedit* (25–6). This provides a smooth transition to the next section of the speech, in which Oedipus agonises over his having survived beyond infancy and over his crimes against his parents. His consideration of these leads him to the awareness that there is yet a most characteristic crime that he can commit against his daughter (see on 48), and at this climactic point the speech ends.

1 caeci parentis Cf. S. *OC.* 1 τέκνον τυφλοῦ γέροντος. Oedipus' blindness, a recurrent motif which is variously exploited in this first act of *Phoen.*, (cf., e.g., 170), is alluded to several times in the opening lines of the play: *caeci* 1, *errantem gradum* 4, *non uideo* 9, *caecum . . . pedem* 11. Its function here is to help to create a vivid initial picture of the broken and blinded state of the once heroic Oedipus (cf. also *fessi*). Compare the beginning of Sen. *Oedip.*, where the occurrence, within a dozen lines, of *timeo* (15), *timor* (22), *metuas* (26), *expauesco* (27), conveys the terror of the king.

This is the first of many references by Oedipus to himself as a father (see also 3, 49, 93, 95, 98, 121, 135, 230, 295, 301, 333, 336). The obsessive insistence on his paternity by Oedipus suggests unresolved guilt concerning his incest.

regimen The only other instance in Senecan tragedy of *regimen* used personally occurs at *Agam.* 705, where Hecuba is called *regum mater et regimen Phrygum.* Tarrant *ad loc.* notes the following parallels: Liv. 4.31.5; Val. Max. 1.1.9. In Stat. *Theb.* 4.536 *o nostrae regimen uiresque senectae*, spoken by Teiresias to Manto, *regimen*, as here, means 'guide'. *Regimen* is more commonly used of the management or control of public or private affairs (see *OLD regimen* 3; on the development of the semantic range of *regimen*, see J. Perrot, *Les Dérivés latins en -men et -mentum* (Paris, 1961), 247–8). Its use here, in the first verse of the play, may be intended as a subtle reminder of the changed position of the former *rerum Thebanarum regimen.*

1–2 fessi unicum / patris leuamen Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1250–1 *unicum lapsae domus firmamen*; *Med.* 945–6 *unicum afflictae domus/ solamen*; *Troad.* 703–4 *unicum adflictae mihi/ solamen*; *Phaedr.* 267 *solamen annis unicum fessis*; *Agam.* 910 *paternae mortis auxilium unicum. Unicum* not only contributes to the general pathos of the situation (see on *caeci parentis* 1) but has implications for Seneca's treatment of the legend: it points to the traditional lack of concern of Oedipus' sons and suggests that Ismene is to be excluded from Seneca's drama (see also on 81, 211). The interlocked arrangement of the two noun-epithet pairs is very common in Senecan drama: Canter, 174, estimates its average occurrence as being once in every thirty lines; in *Phoen.*, cf., e.g., 9, 58, 123, 209, 326.

2 lateris leuamen *Patris* has MS consensus. Gronovius' conjecture, *lateris*, offered without explanation, has been widely accepted, though not by Zwierlein in his OCT. The main objection to *patris* is that it results in tedious, unemphatic repetition with *parentis* 1 and *patrem* 3 (contrast 267–8, where such repetition is emphatic). It might also be argued that *parentis* . . . *patris* could suggest two different people.

Fessi unicum/ lateris leuamen should probably be translated 'sole comfort to me, weary', with *lateris* being an example of synecdoche. Although *latus* is nowhere else used in this way, *pars pro toto* was very widespread and could easily be extended. One might also consider taking it as 'sole support of my weary side', the image being a concrete one – of Antigone allowing Oedipus to lean on her as they walk along. However, such a use of *leuamen* is not attested elsewhere, and in the three other instances of *leuamen* in Senecan drama – *Troad.* 961, *Med.* 548, *Agam.* 491– it has the sense of 'comfort'. Of *lateris* and *patris*, *lateris* is clearly the *lectio difficilior*, and the corruption to *patris* might have occurred in order to avoid the unusual synecdoche, or simply under the influence of *parentis* 1 and *patrem* 3.

Bothe's conjecture, *fratris*, has in its favour that it stresses the unnatural relationship between Antigone and Oedipus in a play which revolves around confused family relationships. The corruption of *fratris* to *patris*, especially in view of the proximity of *parentis* and *patrem*, would have been easy. *Fratris*, however, is unacceptable because it is un-Senecan: Seneca is capable of slick, exaggerated cleverness, but he is never as crudely obvious as this (compare 49–50, where Oedipus merely hints at the possibility of his turning his incestuous gaze from his mother to his daughter).

nata Oedipus addresses Antigone as *nata* five times during the

play. This instance may be compared with 229 where, as here, *nata* occurs in close proximity to *pater*, in order, it would seem, to highlight a context in which Oedipus' incestuous activities are mentioned.

Phoen. is the only Senecan drama in which no character addresses another by name at any point. Furthermore, only once does a character refer to another by name (in 554 Jocasta mentions Oedipus by name). Although it is normal in classical tragedy for *dramatis personae* to refer to, and address, one another using periphrases, there are various instances in Senecan drama (as also in Greek tragedy) where a character's avoidance of a proper name is rhetorically pointed: in Sen. *Agam.*, for example, Clytemnaestra appears deliberately to avoid using Agamemnon's name as being painful or distasteful to her, whereas, by contrast, she uses Aegisthus' name freely. Costa on Sen. *Med.* 218ff. notes that Medea cannot bring herself to use Jason's name when speaking of him to Creon (who is part of the new family that has taken Jason from her), and he observes that in E. *Med.* Jason and Medea avoid using each other's names when speaking together.

In Sen. *Phoen.*, the absence of proper names has a different significance: it is not the avoidance of names but rather the terms which Seneca uses in their place which are noteworthy. Characters constantly both address and refer to one another in terms which indicate their consanguinity, and words indicating family relationships occur more frequently in *Phoen.* than in any other Senecan tragedy: a family term occurs on average once in every 4.2 lines, whereas the next most frequent occurrence is once in every 7.2 lines of narrative in *Thyest.* (see *Appendix* for detailed distribution of family terms in all the plays). The strikingly high incidence of these terms in *Phoen.* is clearly not due only to tragic convention or to the subject matter – *Thyest.*, for example, is also very much concerned with the family, but it does not exhibit the same abundance of family terms. Rather, words denoting family relationships are used with cumulative effect as a rhetorical device to sustain the theme of the genetic chaos which reigns in the Theban royal house.

One can compare Cic. *Clu.* 12, where Cicero says of Sassia, Cluentius' evil mother: *mater enim a me in omni causa, tametsi in hunc* [sc. *Cluentium*] *hostili odio et crudelitate est, mater, inquam, appellabitur*. . . . Sassia's crime was an unnatural one for a mother and Cicero stresses this by repeatedly referring to her as *mater*. In Ov. *Met.* 10.467–8, with reference to the affair between Myrrha and her father, Onyras, we read: *'filia' dixit,/ dixit et illa 'pater', sceleri ne nomina desint.* In Apul. *Met.* 10.3,

on the other hand, we find an avoidance of the family term which is as marked as is its deliberate use in Sen. *Phoen.* and Cic. *Clu.*: of the stepmother in love with her stepson, Apuleius says, . . . *ad se uocari praecipit filium – quod nomen in eo, si posset, ne ruboris admoneretur, libenter eraderet*, and he subsequently refers to the stepson only as *adulescens* and as *iuuenis*.

2–3 quam tanti est mihi/ genuisse uel sic Cf. *Phoen.* 651–2 *est tanti mihi/ cum regibus iacere. Vel sic* is heavily cryptic, but no doubt Oedipus means that he is happy to have produced a daughter like Antigone even though she was born of an incestuous union. For *uel* with adverbs, see *OLD uel* 5b and c.

3 infaustum Neither in Sen. *Oedip.* nor in Sen. *Phoen.* is there a direct reference to the ancestral curse to which Oedipus falls victim (contrast A. *Th.* 742–61, S. *OC.* 962–7, E. *Ph.* 17–20). In *Oedip.*, the chorus sings in general terms of the *ueteres deum irae* which harass the house of Labdacus (709–37), but in *Phoen.* there is not even that – perhaps because of the absence of choral odes, for which such material would be well-suited. Early in both plays, however, *infaustus* is used to describe Oedipus (cf. *Oedip.* 80). The word has a semantic range which extends from 'unlucky' (as in Verg. *Aen.* 5.635; Tac. *Ann.* 2.41) through 'ill-omened' in a general sense (as in Sil. 9.164; Stat. *Silu.* 2.1.120), to the very specific 'cursed by the gods' (as in Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1135; Tac. *Ann.* 1.30). Both here, and more particularly in *Oedip.* 80, Seneca may be exploiting the different levels of meaning of the epithet, to cover the misery of Oedipus' physical circumstances, his lack of favour with the gods as a result of his crimes, and his labouring under the hereditary curse on his family. Cf. *nefandi* 7.

4 errantem gradum *Errantem*, in a context where Oedipus' physical weakness is given prominence, must refer specifically to his stumbling gait rather than, in general terms, to his wandering in exile. *Erro* may be used of various parts of the body – feet, hands, eyes, veins, lips (see *TLL* 5.808.16–48 and Sen. *Ep.* 83.21, where the same phrase occurs in a description of drunkenness).

5 permitte labi; melius inueniam uiam On *permitto* + infinitive, common from Livy onward, see KS 2.230; LHS 2.345. For the expression, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1245 *mortis inueniam uiam*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 33 *permitte tantum, genitor: inueniam uiam.*

5–6 melius inveniam uiam/ quam quaero solus quae me ab hac uita extrahat This is an inversion of the stage convention whereby a blind man asks his guide to lead him where he wants to go: cf. E. *Ph.* 834–48; S. *OT.* 444, *OC.* 21. It is also reminiscent of S. *OC.* 1542–4, where Oedipus says to Antigone and Ismene:

χωρεῖτε, καὶ μη ψαύετ', ἀλλ' ἐᾶτέ με
αὐτὸν τὸν ἱερὸν τύμβον ἐξευρεῖν, ἵνα
μοῖρ' ἀνδρὶ τῷδε τῆδε κρυφθῆναι χθονί.

On the centrality of the image of the road in the first act of *Phoen.*, see D. & E. Henry, 148. There may be some play here on the philosophical and poetic commonplace that life is a *uia* to death (see Armisen-Marchetti, *Sapientiae Facies*, 88 and 182 n.56 for references).

Solus is held back and used to separate the two adjectival clauses, both of which qualify *uiam.* This has the dual effect of throwing *solus* into relief and of delaying the second clause, which contains the more shocking idea – Oedipus' desire for death.

7 nefandi capitis The synecdoche, *caput* (cf. Greek κεφαλή and κάρα), occurs most commonly in Senecan drama, as Fitch on *Her. Fur.* 920 observes, with various execratory adjectives (see Canter, 123, for further examples). It may, however, also express affection and respect, as at *Her. Fur.* 1334, *Phaedr.* 677, *Oedip.* 291.

8 caelum atque terras The association or polarisation of *caelum* and *terrae* to indicate limitlessness or totality is proverbial: see Otto, *caelum* 1 and *Nachträge*, 263. E. Courtney (*A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (London, 1980)) on Juv. 2.25 notes in addition Sil. 13.586–7.

quantulum hac egi manu! Diminutives are rare in Senecan drama: *paruulus*, which occurs six times (*Oedip.* 463, 806, *Thyest.* 144, *Herc. Fur.* 1020, *Troad.* 456, 1089), and *quantulum*, which occurs only here, are the sole examples. *Quantulum* is rare in poetry; however, it is found frequently in Seneca's prose works, both in adjectival form, and, as it is used here, as a substantive: cf., e.g., *Ben.* 7.24.1 *Quantulum enim erat, quod Socrates accipiebat!*, *Clem.* 1.5.2 *Quantulum enim nocet priuata crudelitas!* *Quantulum* here, as in the examples cited above, is exclamatory rather than interrogative; on this, see Housman, *Class. Pap.*, 3.1083.

9–10 non uideo noxae conscium nostrae diem,/ sed uideor Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 1001 *conscium euasi diem.* Oedipus' sense of the inadequacy of his act of self-mutilation as a means of isolating himself is

expressed also at 224–31, where he laments the fact that he can still hear. In *non uideo . . . diem*, Seneca may be adopting the notion, common in Greek thought, that the polluted are unfit to look on the sun, the source of purity; cf. S. *OT.* 1424–9, where Creon is unwilling for Oedipus to remain for long in the sight of the sun (also E. *Med.* 1327, *Or.* 821–2; Dem. 19.267). Alternatively, this may be a more general reminder of Oedipus' sightlessness and pollution, *diem* being a contrast to the *noctem* of his blindness and of his moral uncleanness (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 977, where Oedipus, having gouged out his eyes, says: *inuenta thalamis digna nox tandem meis* and *Phoen.* 143–4, where Oedipus, feeling that his blindness is inadequate expiation for his crimes, says: *sceleri haec meo/ parum alta nox est.* On physical and moral light or darkness in Senecan drama, see Herington, 433.

uideo . . . uideor For paronomasia of this kind, involving the change of voice of a verb, cf. also *Phoen.* 493 *fallere . . . falli*, 640–1 *uincere . . . uiceris*; for examples in the other dramas, see Canter, 162. This device is characteristic of the exercises in the rhetorical schools; see Bonner, *Rom. Decl.*, 70, 167. For examples in Seneca's prose works, see Hine on Sen. *QN.* 2.1.1; in other authors, see Fordyce on Catull. 45.20.

11 caecum pedem For the expression, cf. S. *OC.* 182–3 ἕπε' ὧδ'ἀμαυ-/ ρῷ κώλῳ, πάτερ, ᾇ σ'ἄγω; E. *Ph.* 1539–40 βακτρεύμασι τυφλοῦ/ ποδὸς, *Hec.* 1050 τυφλὸν τυφλῷ στείχοντα παραφόρῳ ποδί; also Verg. *Aen.* 6.30 *caeca regens filo uestigia.*

12–13 qua praerupta protendit iuga/ meus Cithaeron Cf. S. *OT.* 1451–2, where Oedipus likewise claims Cithaeron as his own –οὑμὸς κιθαιρὼν οὗτος. On the personification of Cithaeron through the active use of *protendo*, see Hillen, 206.

13–25 By evoking the figures of destruction in Thebes' past – Actaeon, Zethus, Agave, Ino – Seneca suggests that violence is woven into the fabric of the history of the house of Thebes. The pattern of violence continues in the present with Oedipus' self-destructive urge and with the conflict of Eteocles and Polyneices. Both Oedipus and Jocasta predict, moreover, that violence lies in store for anyone who rules Thebes (277–8, 648–9). See further on *manus* 51.

13–18 For the association of the deaths of Actaeon and Pentheus on Cithaeron, cf. E. *Ba.* 1290–2.

14–15 iacuit Actaeon suis/ noua praeda canibus Cf. Ov. *Trist.* 2.106 *praeda fuit canibus . . . ille [Actaeon] suis*; Manil 5.183 *[Actaeon] canibus noua praeda fuit.* Jakobi (*Einfluss*, 42) notes in addition Verg. *Aen.* 9.485–6, where the reference is to Euryalus and not to Actaeon but *iacere* appears: *heu, terra ignota canibus data praeda Latinis/ alitibusque iaces.* The juxtaposition and emphatic positioning of *suis* and *noua* (= 'strange') stress the extraordinariness of Actaeon's fate.

15–16 per obscurum nemus/ siluamque opacae uallis For the association of *nemus* and *silua*, cf. Cic. *Diu.* 1.114 *multos nemora siluaeque, multos amnes aut maria commouent*; Verg. *Aen.* 6.703–4 *uidet Aeneas . . . / seclusum nemus et uirgulta sonantia siluae.* A *nemus*, a grove or wood, is more limited in size than a *silua*. *Silua* can be synonymous with *nemus*, but its meaning may extend to include a large forest with shrubs, foliage, and undergrowth. Here, as in the other examples cited, Seneca moves in his description from the specific and the limited (*nemus*) to the more general (*silua*). On the nature of the terrain, see E.R. Dodds (*Euripides: Bacchae* (Oxford, 1986 repr. of 1960 ed.)) on E. *Ba.* 32–3, 1051–2.

16 instinctas deo A rare expression, which according to *TLL*, is found elsewhere only at Iuuenc. 1.276 *uatis uox instincta deo.* Where *instinctus* is used of divine intervention, the deity is usually less directly referred to; cf., e.g., Liv. 5.15.10 *diuino spiritu*, Val. Max. 1.8.10 *impulsu . . . numinis* (but contrast Sen. *Phaedr.* 339 *Venere*) (*TLL* 7.1982–3).

17 sorores mater Agaue's sisters, Ino and Autonoë, took part in the dismembering of Pentheus (E. *Ba.* 1129–30; Ov. *Met.* 3.719–22). Perhaps, though, Seneca is using *sorores* in the sense of 'sisters in crime', with reference to the whole crowd of Bacchanals, as in Ov. *Met.* 3.713–14 *adeste sorores . . . / ruit omnis in unum turba furens.* Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 616–17 *furibunda Agaue, tota quam sequitur manus/ partita regem.*

Antithesis created by the juxtaposition of family terms is not uncommon in Senecan drama (cf. *pater natos* 289 and see Canter, 152–3, for further examples). Here, the juxtaposition reinforces the sense of a bizarre family crime, a worthy precedent for Oedipus' own crimes against his family.

gaudens malo For the thought, cf. E. *Ba.* 1144 θήρᾳ δυσπότμῳ γαυρουμένη. For the expression, cf. Plaut. *Stich.* 394; Ter. *Andr.* 627; Cic. *Tusc.* 3.19; Ov. *Met.* 8.126, 11.106, *Trist.* 2.569–70.

18 uibrante fixum praetulit thyrso caput Cf. E. *Ba.* 1139–42 κρᾶτα/. . ./ πήξασ' ἐπ' ἄκρον θύρσον . . ./ φέρει. For the combination of *uibrare* and *thyrsus* (cf. Greek θυρσοτινάκτης), cf. also Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 474, *Oedip.* 441, 628. The impaling of Pentheus' head on a thyrsus is a detail apparently introduced by Seneca, perhaps suggested by the military practice of displaying as a trophy the head of a slain enemy impaled on a spear; see Hirschberg *ad loc.*

19–21 Antiope, daughter of Nycteus, fled from her home when Zeus tried to seduce her. She married Epopeus of Sicyon and bore twin sons, Amphion and Zethus. Before Nycteus committed suicide, he ordered his brother Lycus to punish Antiope. Lycus killed Epopeus of Sicyon and captured Antiope, whom he, and particularly his jealous wife, Dirce, tormented. Antiope eventually escaped, found her sons, and they avenged themselves on Dirce.

The lost *Antiope* of Euripides was the main source for subsequent versions of the legend. If Seneca did not know E. *Ant.* or Pacuvius' *Antiope*, which, according to Hyginus (*Fab.* 8), was closely modelled on the Euripidean play, he must have been familiar with a contemporary version no doubt influenced by the Greek dramatist's work (on Hyginus' confusion of Ennius and Pacuvius, see H.J. Rose, *Hygini Fabulae* (Leyden, 1963, 1st ed. 1933), 10 and Ribbeck, *röm. Trag.*, 281–2). According to Hyginus, in E. *Ant.*, as in the parallel version found in Apollod. 3.5.5, Dirce is punished by being tied to a bull and dragged to death. The action of the Euripidean play takes place at Eleutherae on Cithaeron; both Vergil (*Ecl.* 2.23–4) and Propertius (3.15.41–2), however, associate Dirce with Aracythus – not the more famous Aracynthus of Acarnania, but apparently a mountain between Boeotia and Attica (see *RE* 2.377.46–9), perhaps part of the Cithaeron range (so L. Richardson (Norman, 1977) on Prop. 3.15.42; Robert Coleman (Cambridge, 1977) on Verg. *Ecl.* 2.24).

19 corpus inuisum Leo emended the reading of the MSS, *inuisum*, to *inlisum* (cf. *Phaedr.* 1093, where *inlisum* occurs in a very similar context to this one; *corpus inuisum* occurs in *Phoen.* 96 and *Phaedr.* 1158). The only problem with *inuisum* here would seem to be that, since no indirect object is expressed, it is not clear to whom Dirce's body was hateful. The syntax suggests that it was hateful to the bull – as an unfamiliar burden, perhaps, or possibly because he has adopted his masters' loyalties and feuds (as slaves do in Roman comedy), but the implication of the legend is that the body was *inuisum*

primarily to Antiope's sons. In any event, the ambiguity does not pose a serious enough difficulty to warrant emendation.

21 tauri ferocis sanguis ostentat fugas *Tauri ferocis* depends on *fugas* and not on *sanguis*, since it is Dirce's blood, and not the bull's, that is leaving the gory trail.

On separated genitives, see LHS 2.692, where the closest parallel cited is Liv. 30.3.3 *castra in conspectu Hasdrubalis erant* (where the genitive depends on *castra* rather than *conspectu* as its position suggests). On similar kinds of hyperbaton, see further A.E. Housman (*Marcus Manilius: Astronomicon* (Hildesheim and New York, 1972 repr. of 1903 ed.)) on Manil. 5.568, *Class. Pap.*, 2.640–1; NH on Hor. *Od.* 1.35.6.

22–3 uel qua alta maria uertice immenso premit/ Inoa rupes Seneca seems to have had in mind Ovid's description of the *Inoa rupes* in *Met.* 4.525–6: *imminet aequoribus scopulus: pars ima cauatur/ fluctibus. Premo* here = 'tower above', 'overhang', as at Sen. *Thyest.* 642–3 *latus* [sc. *domus*]/ *aequale monti crescit atque urbem premit*; Stat. *Theb.* 5.154 *insuper ingens mons premit.*

23 nouum *Suum* has MS consensus, but Peiper's *nouum* has been widely accepted (cf. *Phoen.* 549 *facinus . . . nouum*, *Thyest.* 62 *noui sceleris*). It is attractive for various reasons. Firstly, it creates a parallel with Oedipus' own situation: he too fled a *nouum scelus* (the murder of his father) to commit another *nouum scelus* (marriage with his mother). Secondly, it balances *nouumque* and Seneca is particularly fond of anaphora at the end and beginning of successive lines (cf., e.g., *Phoen.* 450–1 *dexteras matri date,/ date dum piae sunt* and see Canter, 159). Thirdly, it brings the version of the legend followed by Seneca into line with that found in Ov. *Met.* 4.416ff., which Seneca follows closely in the whole passage (13–26): the first *nouum* refers to the murder by Athamas, Io's husband, of their second son, Melicertes; see Zwierlein (1966), 683.

Gronovius' conjecture, *uiri*, also fits in with Ovid's version, but it is paleographically difficult and lacks the appeal of *nouum*, as does Bothe's *ferum*, conjectured by analogy with *Troad.* 1057–8 *quod tam ferum, tam triste bis quinis scelus/ Mars uidit annis? Suum* has little to recommend it. It neither balances not contrasts with *nouumque*, and it demands an obscure version of the legend found in Hyginus (*Fab.* 2) and referred to at Paus. 1.44.7 and Apollod. 1.9.1, in which Ino plots to kill Phrixus, the son of Athamas by a former wife. She fails, and,

fleeing the wrath of Athamas, hurls herself into the sea with Melicertes.

Inoa rupes Pausanias 1.44.7 identifies this as the Molourian rock, situated on the road from Megara to Corinth. This road ran along the southern shore of Megarian territory; see J.G. Frazer (*Pausanias' Description of Greece* (New York, 1965), vol. 2) on Paus. 1.44.6. If Pausanias can be relied upon, Seneca is stretching the tradition somewhat by associating the *Inoa rupes* with Cithaeron itself, although the extension of the Cithaeron range did run southwards into Corinth and thence from west to east across Megaris, and the section of the road on which Pausanias locates the *Inoa rupes* ran through these mountains.

25 mersura natum seque *Mergo* not infrequently has the sense of 'drown', and *mersura natum* is thus not remarkable; *mersura se*, however, according to *TLL*, is the only instance in classical Latin of *mergo* used reflexively with this sense (*TLL* 8.832.61).

25–6 felices quibus/ fortuna melior tam bonas matres dedit Sc. *sunt* with *felices quibus.* The ellipsis is standard in exclamations introduced by *felix*; cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.329, *Am.* 2.5.9; Stat. *Theb.* 10.615. Oedipus paradoxically calls Ino and Agaue *bonae matres* since the death that they inflicted on their respective sons is his dearest wish.

27–8 On the location of 1–362, see Intro., 2–3, n.12.

27 noster . . . locus Cf. *sedes meas* 30, *hospitium . . . meum* 31–2. The notion of a special place for Oedipus may have its source in S. *OC.* 88–98, in which play it foreshadows Oedipus' 'apotheosis', the acknowledgement by the gods of his heroic endurance. Seneca's Oedipus has not risen above his suffering or come to terms with his guilt, and his appointed place does not mark the end of a long struggle against adversity. The special place of the Sophoclean Oedipus is in Athens, far away from Thebes with which his misery is associated; the place which calls to the Senecan Oedipus, however, is on Cithaeron, where his troubles began. Sophocles' Oedipus has struggled and won; Seneca's Oedipus has not begun to accept his misfortunes.

29 non haesitabit gressus Cf. 4 *errantem gradum.* Oedipus' gait is uncertain when he is being led along the right path by Antigone, but, paradoxically, it will not falter when he goes to his death in the

appointed place; on this, see Wurnig, 81–4, and cf. S. *OC.* 1542–3, where Oedipus declares that he will find his own way to the place where he is to die.

29–30 huc omni duce/ spoliatus ibo Cf. S. *OC.*, where Oedipus' determination to go to his death alone is mentioned several times (1520–1, 1541–6, 1588–9).

30 quid moror sedes meas? Cf. S. *OC.* 1627–8, where the god calls to Oedipus: ὦ οὗτος οὗτος, Οἰδίπου: τί μέλλομεν/ χωρεῖν. Here, as frequently in Senecan drama (see Canter, 142), the rhetorical question is used by the speaker to goad himself into action. The use of *moror* here appears to be unique: *moror* is not infrequently used of inanimate objects, but it always has the sense of 'delay', and never, as here, 'keep waiting' (*TLL* 8.1498.78–1499.15).

30–7 For the desire of Seneca's Oedipus to return to Cithaeron to die as he should have done as a child, cf. S. *OT.* 1391–3, 1451–5. Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 77) suggests that Seneca may have been thinking of E. *Ph.* 1751–2 (ἴθ'ἀλλὰ βρόμιος ἵνα τε σηκὸς/ ἄβατος ὄρεσι μαινάδων) when he wrote these verses, and Cima, 258, who maintains that all the acts of Sen. *Phoen.* were derived from E. *Ph.*, believes that the inspiration for the whole first scene could have come from E. *Ph.* 327ff. However, as Mesk, 307, correctly points out, the resemblance between Sen. *Phoen.* 30–7 and the passages cited by Leo and Cima is by no means as strong as that between *Phoen.* 30–7 and S. *OT.* 1451–5. On Seneca's familiarity with the Sophoclean play, see Intro., 20.

31–8 Oedipus' appeal to Cithaeron exhibits certain characteristics of traditional prayer form: invocation of the deity (see G. Appel, *De Romanorum precationibus* (New York, 1975; repr. of 1909 edn., Gissae), 75–6, on the importance of the name); the list of requests to be granted – *redde* 31 . . . *restitue* 32 . . . *recipe* 33 . . . *perage* 36 (cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 3.85–6, 5.689–92); the use of *semper* followed by characteristics of the deity invoked (cf., e.g., Cic. *Dom.* 114 . . . *et te, custos urbis, Minerua, quae semper adiutrix consiliorum meorum, testis laborum exstitisti* . . ., and see NH on Hor. *Od.* 2.8.15) – this usually follows the invocation and does not, as here, occur in the middle of the request; alliteration – *semper* . . . *saeve, cruente* . . . *crudelis* 34, *mandatum* . . . *matris* 36–7, *perage* . . . *patris* 36, *animus* . . . *antiqua* 37 (see Appel, 160–1). The substance of Oedipus' supplication, however, – that Cithaeron will give him death – is an inversion of the usual kind of prayer, in which a

deity is asked either to grant something positive or to avert an evil, and the epithets used of Cithaeron are the antithesis of the flattering kind of epithet that the Romans used of a deity being invoked (on these, see Appel, 94–101). Seneca here manipulates a traditional form in order to impress powerfully upon his audience the bizarre paradox of Oedipus' situation. The emphatic position of *mortem* reinforces this.

31 mortem On the superiority of *mortem* (*E*) over 'das unerträglich banale' *montem* of *A*, Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 116) notes that *mortem* is supported by *recipe supplicium uetus* (33), *olim iam tuum/ est hoc cadauer* (35–6), and *antiqua exsequi/ supplicia* (37–8).

hospitium The significance of *hospitium* lies in the sense of transience which it conveys. Like a lodger at a guest-house, Oedipus plans to linger only temporarily on Cithaeron, but, unlike the lodger, who leaves the guest-house to continue his journey, Oedipus' stay on Cithaeron will be temporary because he intends to die there.

32 senex The only other reference in Sen. *Phoen.* to Oedipus' age is at 350. Cf. S. *OC.*, where the fact of Oedipus' advancing years is stressed, being mentioned by Oedipus himself (1, 395, 870, 961), by the chorus (125, 177, 209, 292, 305), and by each of the other characters. In the Sophoclean play, Oedipus' age is further emphasised by the insistence on his physical weakness (cf., e.g., 9–20, 148, 201, 496, 1109). This portrayal of Oedipus has the dramatic function of preparing the audience for his imminent death and of contrasting his physical frailty with his near-daemonic stature at the end of the play.

In Sen. *Phoen.*, Oedipus does not seem to be particularly old and frail: *fessi* (1) could refer to his mental as much as to his physical state, and there is no other suggestion of his having been enfeebled by age. As a Roman *senex*, Oedipus need not be more than forty, although G.E. Duckworth (*The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1971 repr. of 1952 edn.), 89–90), points out that the comic *senex* is definitely an old man (and in Senecan tragedy cf., e.g., Teiresias in *Oedip.* and Amphitryon in *Herc. Fur.*). In Sen. *Phoen.*, for the dramatic situation to be at all plausible, Oedipus cannot be too old, since his mother, who must be at least fifteen years older than he, is still alive and vigorous. To suggest, however, that Seneca was concerned about such details, is probably to impute too much realism to him. Here the point of *senex* is a rhetorical one – the contrast it establishes with *infans* in the following verse.

33 ubi debui infans Nicely ambiguous: it is not clear whether Oedipus himself feels that he ought to have died on Cithaeron as a child (because in this case his crimes as an adult would not have occurred), or whether *debui* refers to the fact that he was destined by his parents to die but escaped by luck.

supplicium uetus Cf. *antiqua . . . supplicia* (37–8). A *supplicium* presupposes a *scelus*, and Oedipus had committed no crime when he was left to die on Cithaeron as an infant. An explanation of this conceit is provided by 251–3, where Oedipus describes himself as having been made *sceleris infandi* [i.e. the murder of his father] *reum* by Apollo even before he was born, and as having been condemned to death in consequence. Oedipus *infans* had done nothing to warrant death, but his parricide having been divinely ordained and being therefore immutable, Oedipus *senex* regards himself as having been guilty of the crime even *in utero*.

34 cruente = 'bloodthirsty' rather than 'bloodstained': so Sen. *Contr.* 1.7.13 *descripsit mores hominis impii, cruenti*; Luc. 4.822 *Mariusque ferox et Cinna cruentus*. Cithaeron could, of course, be described as 'bloodstained' in view of the deaths which have taken place on it (12–25), but the other epithets in the verse, *saeue crudelis ferox*, imply an active savagery with which 'bloodthirsty' accords better. For four adjectives in asyndeton, cf. 223 with note *ad loc.*

35 cum occidis et cum parcis Cf. Sen. *Med.* 432 *cum saeuit et cum parcit*, where the power over life and death, here ascribed to Cithaeron, is attributed to fate. *Occidis* presumably refers to Actaeon, Pentheus, Dirce, and Ino, while *parcis* refers to Oedipus himself. For Oedipus, paradoxically, it was as cruel to be spared as it was for the others to die (cf. 97–100, where the same idea is made explicit).

For the elision of the initial *cum*, cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 602 *cum examen*; in general, on the elision of monosyllables in Senecan tragedy, see Soubiran, 420–3. Such elision is particularly common in *Phoen.*

36 cadauer Seneca may here be trying to convey either or both of two ideas: firstly, that Oedipus, who did not die in infancy as his father intended, sees himself as having been a *cadauer* in terms of his father's *mandatum* since that time, and secondly, that, as a result of his self-blinding, Oedipus regards himself as little more than a *cadauer* (cf. Sen. *Contr.* 7.4.9, where the expression *uiua cadauera* is used of two men who have lost their eyes and their hands respectively). The image

of Oedipus as a living corpse recurs at 94–5, 98–9; cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 949–51 *quaeratur uia/ qua nec sepultis mixtus et uiuis tamen/ exemptus erres.* Tarrant on Sen. *Thyest.* 724 observes that *cadauer* is a more emotive word than *corpus* since it conveys more strongly the physical realities of death.

36–7 perage mandatum patris,/ iam et matris Cf. S. *OT.* 1452–3 . . . Κιθαιρὼν . . . ὃν μήτηρ τε μοι/ πατήρ τ'ἐθέσθην ζῶντε κύριον τάφον. Elsewhere Sophocles makes Laius alone responsible for the exposure of Oedipus on Cithaeron (*OT.* 717–20; cf. E. *Ph.* 1600–1), but in 1452–3, he makes Oedipus, overwhelmed by the recent discovery of his crimes against both of his parents, think of both Laius and Jocasta as having decreed his death. Seneca's Oedipus, similarly oppressed by guilt, also associates his death with a past *mandatum* of both his parents; cf. 253, where Laius alone is held responsible for the sentence of death on Oedipus. Sophocles uses a simple τέ to link μήτηρ and πατήρ; Seneca, however, uses *iam et,* which suggests that he is implying a special sense of *mandatum* when it is associated with Jocasta. *Mandatum patris* clearly refers to the *uetus supplicium* owed by Oedipus, and there is no version of the legend in which Jocasta joins with Laius in decreeing the exposure of Oedipus on Cithaeron, perhaps because the oracle which predicts Laius' death at the hands of his son says nothing of the crime which Oedipus will commit against his mother (Robert, *Oidipus,* 68). Nevertheless, Oedipus does commit incest with Jocasta, and for this reason he regards her as joining Laius in demanding *supplicium* from him, albeit not the *uetus supplicium* payable for the parricide. As Farnaby put it: *Olim quidem patris de parricido admoniti oraculo, sed et iam matris, quae mihi necem imprecatur propter incestum.*

For the expression *perage mandatum,* cf. also Sen. *Phaedr.* 592 *aude, anime, tempta, perage mandatum tuum.* For the elision of the initial *iam,* cf. Sen. *Troad.* 418 *Iam erepta, Med.* 281 *Iam exisse.*

37–8 animus gestit antiqua exsequi/ supplicia This sentence forms a bridge between Oedipus' supplication of Cithaeron and his turning back to Antigone and his immediate situation (see Ernst Hansen, *Die Stellung der Affektrede in den Tragödien des Seneca* (Berlin, 1934), 72).

38–9 quid me, nata, pestifero tenes/ amore uinctum?/ quid tenes? Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6.51–2 *'cessas in uota precesque,/ Tros' ait 'Aenea? cessas?'*

Pestifero here (as in Sil. 9.37 *pestifero pugnae castra incendebat amore*) is no more than hyperbole for *odioso*; contrast 220, where *pestifer* has the sense of 'contaminating'. The oxymoron suggests the paradox of Oedipus' situation: one would not usually regard filial devotion as abhorrent, but to Oedipus, who is not a normal parent, and who wants to die because of that fact, the love that motivates Antigone to restrain him from suicide is *pestifer*.

Billerbeck, 40–1. para. 77, observes that Seneca shares Ovid's fondness for compound adjectives in *-fer*, as do Lucan, Statius, and Silius Italicus. For other compound adjectives in *Phoen.*, cf. 132 *luctifica*, 223 *incestificus*, 472 *belligeri*.

40 sequor, sequor Cf. 12 *ibo, ibo*.

iam parce This, like *sequor, sequor*, must be addressed to Laius rather than to Antigone, to whom Oedipus turns with *sanguineum gerens* . . . . For the expression, cf. also Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1015, 1314, *Med.* 1004; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 982.

40–1 sanguineum gerens/ insigne regni . . . rapti It is not clear what precisely Seneca intends us to understand by *insigne*. *Insigne* is usually found in the plural when it is used to indicate the general trappings of office: cf., e.g., Cic. *Sest.* 57; Verg. *Aen.* 8.506. In the singular, it usually refers to a specific mark of distinction, such as a crown (Vell. 2.56.4), a device emblazoned on a shield (Verg. *Aen.* 7.657), or a victor's garland (Sen. *Agam.* 936). In this context, *insigne* is probably intended to suggest a particular piece of royal paraphernalia, such as a crown or a sceptre.

Dingel, 81–2, suggests that the dramatic purpose of Laius' apparition may be to prepare for a further horror in the house of Thebes – the battle between the brothers –, and he observes that the above words 'als Omen auf den blutigen Machtkampf . . . deuten lassen' (82). Admittedly, *regni . . . rapti* here is echoed by *rapto . . . regni* in 57, but, although this may be a conscious attempt on the part of Seneca to forge a verbal link between Oedipus' crime and that of Eteocles, it seems fanciful to see the apparition itself as a foreshadowing device. (On the dramatic significance of Laius' appearance, see on 43–4.)

42–3 inanes . . . uultus Translate 'sightless eyes'. *Inanes* refers to Oedipus' empty eye-sockets: cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 968–9 *lacerat . / . . inanes sinus*; Val. Fl. 4.435 *oculos . . . inanes*; Stat. *Theb.* 10.697 *uultus inanis exstinctique orbes*. *Vultus* probably has a tendency to plurality even when

it means 'face' (cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 220, and see Pease on Verg. *Aen.* 4.4 and *OLD uultus* 2a); here, *uultus* = *oculos*, as in Ov. *Am.* 3.6.28 *rapuit uultus, Xanthe, Neaera tuos*, Val. Fl. 7.104–5 *uirgo silet, nec fixa solo seruare parumper/ lumina nec potuit maestos non flectere uultus*, Stat. *Theb.* 11.700 *meliora meos permulcent sidera uultus.* The image of Laius attacking Oedipus' already sightless eyes symbolises Oedipus' sense that he has to inflict upon himself a more drastic punishment than he has already done.

43–4 nata, genitorem uides?/ ego uideo. Tandem . . . *A* gives 44 to Antigone, which cannot be correct. Firstly, an interjection in the middle of a declamatory outburst would be extraordinarily clumsy; secondly, if the words *Tandem spiritum inimicum expue* are ascribed to Antigone, they make little sense in the context; thirdly, and most importantly, the whole point of the question, *nata, genitorem uides?*, and the emphatic assertion, *ego uideo*, is to indicate to the audience that Oedipus sees Laius but Antigone does not. Clearly, Laius is no more than a figment of Oedipus' sick imagination, and his introduction is intended to suggest the extreme guilt of Oedipus. Seneca's characters are not infrequently represented as seeing visions when they are in the grip of strong emotion: e.g., Andromache thinks that she sees Hector's angry ghost coming to help her when the Greeks are about to dismantle his tomb in their search for Astyanax (*Troad.* 683–8), and before Medea kills her sons, she seems to see the Furies pursuing her in vengeance for her murder of her brother (*Med.* 958–66). One may notice also a declamatory parallel in Quint. *Decl.* 314.20 (ed. Winterbottom), where a man accused of parricide is portrayed as being haunted by the bloody vision of his murdered father.

44 ego uideo. Tandem spiritum inimicum expue Cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 245 *Ferro peremptus spiritum inimicum expuat*, *Ira* 3.43.4 *iam istam spiritum expuimus.* The verse is metrically striking because of the very rare proceleusmatic in the first foot (see Drexler, *röm. Metr.*, 138) and the double elision, which suggests Oedipus' eagerness to expel his life-breath.

44–50 On the combination of hesitation and self-encouragement (cf. 91–3), see Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1281–4.

45 desertor anime *A* reads *anime*, *E* has *animae*. Gronovius emended to *animi*. On the superiority of *anime*, see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 116.

Oedipus is the only character in *Phoen.* to address himself (cf. also 178). The device of addressing one's own heart or soul, which goes back to Homer (see Williams, *Trad. and Orig.*, 461–2), is common in Senecan drama and indicates internal dissent or turmoil; see Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 108f. and on Sen. *Thyest.* 283–4, Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1283–4, Tietze, 37–8 and cf., e.g., Clytemnaestra's self-addresses in *Agam.* 108–9, 192–202, and those of Medea in *Med.* 40–55, 397–8, 562–7, 895–907, 937, 976, 986–8.

On the adjectival use of *desertor*, see Hirschberg *ad loc.*

46 poenas languidas longae morae On the superiority of this, the reading of the MSS, as against the emendation of Grotius (recorded by Gronovius), *poenae languidas longae moras*, see Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 116–17), who observes that the noun-epithet combination of *longa mora* occurs also at Sen. *Agam.* 54 and 426; contrast Sen. *Oedip.* 936–7 *tam magnis breues/ poenas sceleribus soluis.* For the word-order, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 232 *pastor triformis litoris Tartesii*, 256 *Cadmi nobilis stirpem ultimam.* To have two features of homoeoteleuton in a single verse is striking, since the feature occurs only twenty-four times in the whole of *Phoen.* (so D.R. Shackleton-Bailey 'Homoeoteleuton in non-dactylic Latin verse' *RFIC* 120 (1992), 67–71 at 67). There may be expressive intent: the immediate repetition of *-as* and *-ae* enhances the dragging effect by the accumulation of long syllables, while avoiding the jingle of Grotius' emendation.

47 mortem totam recipe *A* has *recipe*, *E* has *recipe admitte.* Leo, who favoured *E* whenever possible, emended to *admitte.* There has, however, clearly been interpolation in *E* (perhaps for the sake of the paronomasia in *omitte . . . admitte*), although it has not expelled the original reading, and since the reading common to *A* and *E* is *recipe*, it is reasonable to suppose that this is correct. For the expression *mortem recipere* in Senecan drama, cf. also *Troad.* 1156. See further Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 117.

47–8 quid segnis traho/ quod uiuo? The MS reading is *quid segnis traho?/ quid uiuo?* Gronovius conjectured *quod uiuo*, although retaining *quid uiuo* in his text. He explained *quod uiuo* as follows: *hoc est, quam partem aut illud quatenus uiuo. Quid parte mei praemortua, reliquam partem uiuam segnis traho?* and cited in support of his conjecture *Phoen.* 113–14 *et in cinerem dabo/ hoc quidquid in me uiuit* and 170–1 *nec me redemi parte: membratim tibi/ perire uolui.* The difficulty with the reading of the MSS is the sense of *traho* which it demands, viz. 'I drag out my life'.

This sense is not attested elsewhere, although the verb is occasionally used intransitively (so, e.g., Sen. *Ben.* 7.13 *Ne traham longius, beneficium maius esse non potest*; Tac. *Hist.* 4.58 *sed est uallum murique et trahendi artes*. . . . A translation which reflects the limiting sense of *quod uiuo* would be, 'Why do I sluggishly drag out what is still alive in me?', *quod* being an adverbial accusative. For this use of *quod*, cf. Ter. *Phorm.* 361 *nam iam adulescenti nihil est quod succenseam*; Sen. *Ep.* 49.3 *punctum est quod uiuimus et adhuc puncto minus.*

48 nullum facere iam possum scelus? The sense of the sentence in its context depends on punctuation. If one takes it as a question, as do most modern editors, Oedipus is apparently asking whether he is safe from the possibility of committing further crimes. The progression of Oedipus' thinking would then be as follows: 'Why should I live on? Am I immune to the danger of committing a further crime? No, I am not: if I could commit incest with my mother, I have to worry about my daughter too.' The implication of Oedipus' conclusion in this case is that he must die, not only to pay the *supplicium* owed to his parents, but also to ensure that he does not turn to Antigone with incestuous intent. If one takes the sentence as a statement, Oedipus seems to be saying that there is little point in his prolonging his life since there is no further crime he can commit. Immediately, however, he realises that there is still a very characteristic crime that he can commit, and he urges Antigone to leave him. The realisation that it is Antigone who is in danger from him swings Oedipus away from his moment of near-masochistic delight in his *scelera* back to despair and longing for death, a rapid change of mood which is one of the declamatory features of Senecan drams.

The latter interpretation of the verse is attractive inasmuch as Oedipus exhibits the same kind of perverse revelling in his crimes elsewhere in the play (cf. 236, 242, 331–47). Against it, however, is the fact that *possum miser, praedico*, after a preceding statement, needs an adversative particle to indicate Oedipus' new position.

50 uirgo Thus far Oedipus has addressed his daughter only as *nata* (2, 38, 43). *Virgo* is generally used, like the Greek παρθένος, of an unmarried girl, and it is so used of Antigone in 94 and 103. In this particular context, however, where sexual violation is being considered, it seems that *uirgo* (especially since it is here used of Antigone for the first time) may be intended to point specifically to her virgin state. Miller captures its force well in his translation '. . . away, *while*

still a maid', although he does not reflect the fact that *uirgo* is vocative, rather than nominative in a suppressed clause, *dum uirgo es.*

post matrem For the contracted expression ('after your/ my mother' = 'after my incest with your/ my mother'), cf. Sen. *Troad.* 744–5 *ipse post Troiam pater/ posuisset animos*, *Med.* 637 *ipse post terrae pelagique pacem*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 79 *post feras, post bella, post Stygium canem* (for instances in other authors, see NH on Hor. *Od.* 1.18.5 *post uina* and A.E. Housman (*M. Annaei Lucani Belli Civilis Libri Decem* (Oxford, 1926)) on Lucan 5.473 *post pignora tanta*; Mayer, 64, draws attention also to LHS 1.243 and Summers, lxix. In this instance, the omission of a reference to the incest is what is significant. The ambiguity in *matrem* is a striking reminder, particularly in the immediate context, of the bizarre nature of the relationship which already exists between father and daughter.

51–2 Antigone does not respond to Oedipus' fear of committing further incestuous crimes; indeed her opening words would be more appropriate as a reassuring response to a plea from Oedipus that she *not* leave him. It is not until 61, with *prohibeas, genitor, licet*, that we realize that Antigone has in fact understood that Oedipus wishes her to abandon him. Antigone's failure to respond immediately and directly to Oedipus' startling fears and his abrupt dismissal of her creates disjunction between the two speeches. Antigone seems to declaim into a vacuum rather than to interact with her father, with the 'Nothing will make me leave you' motif appearing more as a vehicle for the early introduction of the theme of the fraternal strife (see on 53–8) than as a response to Oedipus.

Hutchinson, 63 n.49, comments on the 'consciously extravagant heroism' of this speech which contrasts with Antigone's 'tenderness and restraint' at the beginning of S. *OC.*

51 manum *Manus* is a prominent word motif in Sen. *Phoen.*, as it is in Sen. *Herc. Fur.* (on motifs and figurative language in Senecan drama, see Norman T. Pratt, 'Major Systems of Figurative Language in Senecan Melodrama' *TAPhA* 94 (1963), 199–234; William H. Owen, 'Commonplace and Dramatic Symbol in Seneca's Tragedies' *TAPhA* 99 (1968), 291–313; on the significance of *manus* in *Herc. Fur.*, see Jo-Ann Shelton, *Seneca's Hercules Furens: Theme, Structure and Style* (*Hypomnemata* 50; Göttingen, 1978), 78–80).

The use of *manus* in *Phoen.*, apart from four instances where it has no particular significance (222, 454, 506, 567), is closely related to

the theme of violence vs. restraint which is central to the play (and conspicuous in Senecan drama in general), and which creates a unifying bond between the two fragments: Antigone's efforts to restrain Oedipus from killing himself in the first fragment (1–362) find their counterpart in Jocasta's attempt to prevent conflict and bloodshed between her sons in the second fragment (363–664). Here, as in 10, 61, and 93, *manus* symbolises Antigone's physical control of Oedipus (cf. *regimen* 1, *regam* . . . *derigam* 62, *derige* 120, *siste* 121, *repone* 122). *Manus* is not used this way in the second fragment, but in both fragments *manus* is associated with violence: of Oedipus towards his parents and towards himself (8, 177, 180, 217, 227, 268, 329), of the brothers towards each other (275, 436, 439, 474, 480, 659), of others (Laius 42, Agave 363, Jocasta 428). *Dextra*, likewise, is associated with violence, in particular with Oedipus' desire to punish himself (91, 154, 155, 173). In the first fragment, the juxtaposition of *manus* (symbolising restraint) with *manus/dextra* (symbolising violence) highlights the theme of violence vs. restraint (cf. 8 and 9, 91 and 93).

53–8 This allusion to the power-struggle between Eteocles and Polyneices is the first of what Pratt (*Dramatic Suspense*, 65) describes as a 'crescendo of reference' to the coming battle of the brothers; further references to future events occur at 108–10, 273–87, 320–62. Antigone's mention here of the fraternal conflict is brief but significant. The brothers are initially introduced to emphasise Antigone's devotion to Oedipus: they are quarrelling over their father's wealthy kingdom, whereas the virtuous Antigone is concerned only to care for Oedipus himself. The contrast having been made between the brothers' greed and Antigone's selfless devotion (cf. S. *OC.* 337–57, 1365–9), there is no need for anything more to be said about the brothers in this context. Seneca, however, deliberately sets out the situation with regard to the kingship which suggests that he is preparing for the dominance of the theme of the fraternal conflict in the second fragment.

54 opulenta . . . regna Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 332 *Urbis regens opulenta Thebanae loca. Opulenta* is regularly used of kingdoms, towns, cities, etc., with the sense of 'abounding in wealth'; frequently the sense of 'powerful' may be present as well (see *TLL* 9.837.25–44).

56–8 non hunc . . . non hunc In 56, there is MS consensus on *hunc* (referring to *pater ipse* in the previous sentence); this Bentley emended to *hanc*, which refers to the subject of the previous sentence,

pars summa (55), to which *pater ipse* stands in apposition. In 58, *E* reads *hunc*, *A hic*, and Bentley again *hanc*. *Hic*, qualifying *alter* (58) is weak. The focal point of Antigone's declaration of fidelity is her father, not her brother, Polyneices. Moreover, *hic* is rhetorically less effective, as the emphatic repetition which would be achieved by reading either *hunc* or *hanc* in both 56 and 58 is lost. As regards Bentley's *hanc*, there is insufficient reason to emend *hunc* in either place: the repetition of *hunc* in 58 supports the notion that it is the correct reading in 56, and *hunc* has greater immediacy than *hanc*, since it refers to Oedipus directly rather than via the phrase *pars summa*.

57 regno . . . rapto I.e. from Polyneices, not from Oedipus (cf. 104 *regna deserui libens*). Cf. *regni . . . rapti* (41), where the reference is to Oedipus' seizing of Laius' throne. The parallelism of expression suggests the idea that wrongdoing within the family follows a pattern – like father, like son. This notion is reinforced by 356–8, where Oedipus expresses the hope that his sons may commit a crime *de more nostro, quod meos deceat toros* (357).

58 cateruas . . . Argolicas *Cateruae* is commonly used to denote the fighting forces of non-Roman peoples (cf., e.g., Sen. *Phaedr.* 400, where it refers to Amazon hordes), and may imply a contrast to the highly disciplined, regular units of the Roman army. It is frequently qualified by the contemptuous adjective *barbaricae* (see Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 601), by a noun in the genitive (e.g. Tib. 1.2.67 *Cilicum . . . cateruas*; Tac. *Ann.* 1.51 *cateruis Germanorum*), or, as here, by a proper adjective (cf. Hor. *Od.* 1.8.16 *Lycias . . . cateruas*; Stat. *Theb.* 9.611 *Amazoniae . . . cateruae*.

59–61 Assertions involving defiance of Zeus' power are as old as Homer and are topical in Greek and Latin literature: in Hom. *Il.* 15.117–18, Ares says that he will avenge his son: εἴ πέρ μοι καὶ μοῖρα Διὸς πληγέντι κεραυνῷ/ κεῖσθαι ὁμοῦ νεκύεσσι μεθ'αἵματι καὶ κονίησιν; cf. also S. *Phil.* 1197–9, *Ant.* 1039–41; Prop. 2.7.3–4; Hor. *Od.* 1.16.5–12.

60 nexus *Nexus* (which occurs nowhere else in Senecan drama) refers most obviously to Antigone's grip on Oedipus' hand (cf. 51–2 *uis nulla . . . a tuo nostram manum/ corpore resoluet*). It can, however, have the sense of a family tie (so Tac. *Germ.* 20.4; Apul. *Met.* 5.20), or of something tangled and intertwined (*OLD nexus* 4). Seneca may here be introducing an ironical reminder about the irregular relationship

between Oedipus and his children (cf. *tam inextricabile* 133) which is a recurrent theme in 1–362. Mastronarde (1970), 304–5, observes that in Sen. *Oedip.*, the Sphinx is associated with Oedipus by various linguistic devices. One of them is the imagery of entanglement and confusion which is applied both to the riddles of the monster and to the family of Oedipus, and which culminates in Laius' outburst that Oedipus' incest has resulted in an *implicatum malum/ magisque monstrum Sphinge perplexum sua* (640–1). In *Phoen.*, *necto* occurs only at 120, where Oedipus himself makes the connection between himself and the Sphinx.

mediumque nostros fulmen in nexus cadat The word order reinforces the sense, with *fulmen* falling between *nostros* and *nexus.* For other cases of congruence between word order and sense, cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 113, where the Isthmus of Corinth is described as *uicina gracili diuidens terra uada*, 161 *inclusisque famem dentibus alligat*, where the enclosing word order reflects Tantalus' imprisonment of his hunger.

61 manum hanc remittam *Hanc* probably refers to Oedipus' hand, rather than to Antigone's own: in other words, Antigone says 'I shall [not] let go of this hand of yours' (cf. 93 *mitte genitoris manum*) and not 'I shall [not] loosen the grip of my hand'. See Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 971, where *hac manu* = 'this hand of yours'; he cites as a parallel Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1319, and notes that *hic* is generally used thus to express affection or supplication.

62 regam . . . derigam For paronomasia of this kind, involving words that are etymologically linked, cf. also 89 *salus . . . saluum*, 90 *ulcisci . . . inultum*, 222 *castam . . . incestificus*, 301–2 *patris . . . patria*, 307 *indomitum domas*, 427 *furenti . . . furit*, 482 *exarmatur, armatus.*

Seneca's desire to emphasise Antigone's unshakeable devotion to Oedipus by making her repeat that she will lead him even against his will, brings him close to bathos as he conjures up the picture of her dragging along her resistant and protesting father. Cf. 98 and 173–4, where, likewise, Seneca's striving for effect verges on the bathetic; also *Oedip.* 1051, *Thyest.* 1004 (with Hutchinson, 65).

63–76 A purple passage of rhetoric, even by Senecan standards, with the balancing rhetorical questions, *in plana tendis* and *praerupta appetis* (63) and the corresponding responses *uado* (63) and *non obsto, sed praecedo* (64); the syncopated syntax of 63 and 64 (a prolative infinitive such as *ire* or *fugere* must be understood after *uis*), coupled with the imperative *utere* and the assonance in *utere duce . . . duobus*; the anaphora

in 66, *potes . . . potes*; the careful structure of 67–73: the anaphora *hic . . . hic . . . hic* introducing a tricolon, each element of which is followed by a rhetorical question, *uis hanc petamus . . . uis hanc petamus . . . in hunc ruamus*; the assonance in 67, *rupes arduo surgit iugo*; the alliteration in 68, *spectatque . . . spatia subiecti maris*; the abundance of epithets, *alta, arduo* (67), *nudus* (69), *rapax* (71); the repetition of *non* (74) and *si* (76); the balance of the opposites *deprecor* and *hortor* (74), *moreris* and *uiuis, antecedo* and *sequor* (76).

The passage as a whole bears a striking resemblance both in style and in content to *Ira* 3.15, where Seneca, advocating suicide to anyone unfortunate enough to live under a tyrant who pierces his friends' breasts with arrows and serves up children to their fathers to eat, imagines that he would say to such a person:

> *Vides illum praecipitem locum? Illac ad libertatem descenditur. Vides illud mare, illud flumen, illud puteum? Libertas illic in imo sedet. Vides illam arborem breuem, retorridam, infelicem? Pendet inde libertas* etc.

The particular piquancy of the version found here consists in Antigone's insistence that, if Oedipus is determined on suicide, she will join him.

On the topos of ways of death, see on 147–9.

65 duobus Dative of the person concerned – 'each route is chosen *for* the two of us' – rather than dative of the agent, since it is Oedipus alone *by* whom the decision where to go will be taken.

66 perire sine me non potes, mecum potes See Tarrant on Sen. *Thyest.* 200 for *sententiae* based on this opposition, and cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1305 *miserum haut potes me facere, felicem potes.* This is the only verse in Senecan drama in which a pyrrhic word (*sine*), constituting the second arsis, is not followed by a monosyllabic form of *esse* (see Strzelecki, 46).

67–73 'I will follow him/ her anywhere' is a common topos to express devotion in Latin poetry: copious references to its use in amatory relationships are listed in J.C. McKeown, *Ovid: Amores* vol. 2 (*ARCA* vol. 22) (Francis Cairns, 1989), 264; for its use in non-romantic contexts, cf., e.g., Prop. 1.6.1–4; Hor. *Epod.* 1.11–14, *Od.* 2.6.1–6. Usually the places mentioned are far-flung corners of the earth, but Seneca here adapts the topos to suit the immediate geographical context.

68 spatia . . . maris Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 79.10 *hoc excelsum cacumen et conspicuum per uasti maris spatia. . . .* For the personification, cf. Sen. *Agam.*

562–3 *arx imminet praerupta quae spectat mare/ utrimque geminum*, *Troad.* 931–2 . . . *rupes, latere quas scisso leuat/ altum uadoso Sigeon spectans sinu?*

72 partesque . . . exesas This is a favourite Senecan metaphor to describe the weathering effect of water (usually the sea) on rock: cf. *QN.* 2.26.5, 3.25.10, 4.2.10; *Ira* 3.35.5; *Herc. Fur.* 154. The wearing away of stone by water is as proverbial in Latin (and Greek) as it is in English (see Otto, *gutta* 2; K.F. Smith (*The Elegies of Tibullus* (Darmstadt, 1978 repr. of 1913 ed.) on Tib. 1.4.18).

76 si moreris, antecedo, si uiuis sequor The presentation of antithetical alternatives is characteristic of declamation and common in Senecan drama: for references, see Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1243–5. This is an example of a 'terminal' *sententia*; see further on 198–9.

77–9 These lines introduce the main theme of the first fragment: whether or not Oedipus should commit suicide.

Suicide, a favourite topic of discussion among Roman Stoics, fascinated Seneca in particular. Passages bearing on Seneca's views on the subject have been collected by Nicole Tadic-Gilloteaux in 'Sénèque face au suicide' *Ant. Class.* 32 (1963), 541–51; see also A.D. Leeman, 'Das Todeserlebnis im Denken Senecas' *Gymnasium* 78 (1971), 322–33; Regenbogen, 'Schmerz und Tod', 456–7.

How does what Seneca says about suicide in 1–319 conform with the teaching of other Stoics and with his own teaching elsewhere? As Pratt observes (*Seneca's Drama*, 102), the mad longing of Oedipus for death, which persists right up to the last few lines of the fragment, is the *libido moriendi* condemned by Seneca in *Ep.* 24.25: *Vir fortis et sapiens non fugere debet e uita, sed exire. Et ante omnia ille quoque uitetur affectus, qui multos occupauit, libido moriendi.* The decision to end one's life should be based on *ratio* and not on *affectus*. Cicero (*Fin.* 3.60) sets out the Stoic position with regard to the circumstances justifying suicide: *In quo plura sunt quae secundum naturam sunt, huius officium est in uita manere; in quo autem aut sunt plura contraria aut fore uidentur, huius officium est a uita excedere*; i.e. a man oppressed by severe illness, dire poverty, old age, or unremitting pain would be justified in committing suicide if, as a *sapiens*, he calculated that the advantages in his life did not outweigh the disadvantages. On the Stoic criteria for an acceptable suicide, see Miriam Griffin, 'Philosophy, Cato, and Roman Suicide: I' *G&R* 33 (1986), 64–75 at 72–5. Seneca does not discuss the basic Stoic position as expressed by Cicero, but his teaching is clearly in accordance with it (cf. *Ep.* 58.33ff., 70.5–6, 120.14 and see Griffin, 372–3. John

M. Rist, while conceding that Seneca in most respects follows orthodox Stoic thinking with regard to suicide, points out that Seneca's insistent linking of suicide and human freedom is unique to him, and that his 'glamorization' of the act need not derive from traditional Stoicism or, indeed, from anything other than Seneca's experience of life at court ('Seneca and Stoic Orthodoxy' in *ANRW* 2.36.3, 1993–2012 at 2004–6).

The overwhelmingly preponderant tendancy in Seneca's writings is in favour of rational suicide: at *Ep.* 77.6, he expresses approval of a Stoic who urged weariness with the daily routine as an adequate motive for the suicide of a chronically, but not critically, sick man. Oedipus would thus appear to be an undoubted candidate for suicide, since there are few discernible advantages to weigh against his disadvantages – his agonising guilt, his isolation, his blindness, the behaviour of his sons. The idea put forward by Antigone here and at 188–92 – that it argues greater courage in misfortune to continue living than to commit suicide – is barely mentioned elsewhere by Seneca; it features only fleetingly in the speeches dissuading Hercules from suicide in *Herc. Fur.* (1275–7), fleetingly also in *Ep.* 78.2–3, and not at all in the short passage advising against ill-considered suicide in *Ep.* 24. At *Ep.* 104.3, Seneca says:

> . . . *interdum, etiam si premunt causae, spiritus in honorem suorum uel cum tormento reuocandus et in ipso ore retinendus est, cum bono uiro uiuendum sit non quamdiu iuuat sed quamdiu oportet.*

Seneca, who was afflicted by chronic ill-health in his youth, himself considered committing suicide at that time, but was deterred by the thought of the grief that his death would cause his father (*Ep.* 78.1–2).

Oedipus' decision to continue living because Antigone demands it of him (319) is thus clearly in accordance with Seneca's teaching elsewhere, and may be seen as the triumph of Oedipus' *ratio* over his former, un-Stoic *libido moriendi.* One can compare Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1302–17, where Hercules consents to abandon his plan to commit suicide for the sake of his father, Amphitryon, who cannot endure life without him.

79 tantis in malis uinci mori est Miller translates: 'amidst such woes to be conquered is to die', which is the logical interpretation of the words as they stand, but which makes no sense in the context, since death is precisely what Oedipus wants and what Antigone is trying to persuade him against. A reads *tantis in malis uinci malum est,*

which is unimpressive since *malum* weakens the effect of the *sententia*; it is probably an instance of the deliberate interpolation for which *A* is notorious (see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 60–2).

Peiper suggested that this line belongs between 192 and 193, where Antigone is again exhorting Oedipus to face up to his troubles rather than to evade them by death. It does not seem, however, that the problem of interpretation posed by 79 is solved by transposing it to a similar context elsewhere in the text. H.MacL. Currie ('Seneca as Philosopher' in *Neronians and Flavians* (ed. D.R. Dudley (London & Boston, 1972), 43), who follows Miller's interpretation of 79, notes a similar clause in Sen. *Ep.* 58.36: *sic mori uinci est*, which obviously means 'to die like this is to be conquered'. The context here demands that *Phoen.* 79, likewise, despite the word order (*mori uinci est* would give a spondee in the final foot) must mean 'amidst such woes to die is to be conquered'. This may simply be a badly written line, but, taking into account the self-conscious striving for effect of Senecan *sententiae*, it is not impossible that such an ambiguous arrangement of words, was thought to add piquancy to the epigram. It is also possible that a radical dislocation of the word order occurred in the archetype: thus Seneca may, for instance, have framed the verse to read *resiste; uinci est in malis tantis mori.* Even *uinci est mori* would ease the expression slightly.

80–181 Oedipus' disbelief at the pious devotion of Antigone as one of the members of his impious family (80–4) leads him back, by contrast, to his own overwhelming sense of pollution (89ff.). He expresses a series of paradoxical ideas – that his only safety lies in not being saved (89–90), that his existence is a living death (94–6), that Antigone's piety is, in the context, not piety at all (97–8), that being forced to die is as bad as, or worse than, being compelled to live (98–101). These effectively suggest a mind tormented to its limits. Oedipus' insistence on his desire for death rather than life (102) and on his right to control his destiny (103–4) reminds him of the kingdom over which he no longer has control and of his quarrelling sons (107–8), the thought of whom drives him to a more urgent desire for action and death (108–10). He contemplates various violent means of death for himself, many of which are echoes of Antigone's suggestions at 67–73. These culminate in the notion that he should occupy the rock on which the Sphinx once sat (118–20), since he is a worse monster than she was (121–2) and, although he could unravel the Sphinx's riddle, he cannot explain the riddle of his own family's fate (138–9).

Oedipus' mood changes strikingly at 140–81 (see commentary *ad loc.*), as, once again, he returns from brooding over his similarity to the Sphinx to a more active desire for death and the contemplation of different methods of achieving it (147–65). The climax of this, and of the speech as a whole, is his resolution to re-open his old wounds and thrust his hands right into his brain (173–81).

The variation of tone and tempo prevents this long speech from becoming monotonous: it rises to a mini-climax at 110–20, slows between 120 and 140, where the long crescendo to the final climax (173–81) – hinted at, but feinted away from in 163–5 – begins.

80–4 Oedipus' incredulity at the possibility of a virtuous child's being born from him is reminiscent of the denial allegedly expressed by Nero's father, Domitius, when he was informed of his son's birth, that *quicquam ex se et Agrippina nisi detestabile et malo publico nasci potuisse* (Suet. *Nero* 6).

80 Unde in nefanda specimen egregium domo This four-word grouping – adjective and noun in agreement enclosing a second noun-adjective pair – is less frequent in Senecan drama than is synchesis (see Canter, 174). The order of the enclosed noun and adjective is variable, but an examination of a random selection of twenty–five examples from six dramas (viz. *Herc. Fur.* 13, 94, 220, 231, 507, 1146; *Med.* 4, 216, 737; *Thyest.* 647, 738, 1039; *Agam.* 127, 745, 1006; *Troad.* 217, 456, 1004, 1087; *Phoen.* 157, 162, 475, 540, 613; *Oedip.* 46) reveals that in every case, whether the noun precedes the adjective or vice versa, the metre would not permit the order to be reversed. One might otherwise have expected the positions of *specimen* and *egregium* to be reversed for the sake of the rhetorical emphasis gained by the juxtaposition of *nefanda* and *egregium.*

specimen egregium The usual figurative meaning of *specimen*, particularly common in Cicero, is the one found here, viz. 'example', 'model' (in neither of the other two occurrences of *specimen* in Senecan drama does it have this sense; cf. *Med.* 389, *Thyest.* 223), and it is most frequently followed by the genitive. Here, there is no dependent genitive, but there is a qualifying adjective, *egregium*, which does duty for a noun in the genitive (e.g. *uirtutis*); cf. Apul. *Met.* 1.23 *tibi specimen gloriosum arrogaris*; perhaps Amm. 23.6.23 *Ctesiphon . . . rex Pacorus . . . Persidis effecit specimen summum.* Thus one might translate as 'model of excellence' or 'example of virtue', avoiding the possible ambiguity of Miller's 'rare type'.

81 ista generi uirgo dissimilis suo Here, as at 1–2 and 309–10, Seneca seems to ignore the existence of Ismene. See further Intro., 8.

82–5 In 82, Oedipus asks whether Fortune has allowed the anomaly of the virtuous Antigone in his tainted house. In 83, he concludes that could not be so, saying *fata bene noui mea* etc. In 85, he refers to *natura*, who must have reversed her laws for a daughter like Antigone to be his. *Fortuna*, *fata*, and *natura* seem here to be synonyms, or near synonyms, for divine providence: cf. Sen. *Ben.* 4.8.3 *Sic nunc naturam uoca, fatum, fortunam; omnia eiusdem dei nomina sunt uarie utentis sua potestate.* This may illustrate the tendency of the Stoics to assimilate traditional religious terms, and to apply them to their own concept of divine causation (see Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 51–2). Contrast Verg. *Aen.*, where fortune and fate are not the same thing, since fate represents the unalterable order of events, fortune the arbitrary element in the working of the divine (see Camps, chap. 5).

82 pius *Pius* occurs six times in Sen. *Phoen.* (82, 89, 330, 409, 410, 451) and *pietas* seven times (97, 261, 310, 381, 455, 536, 585), more frequently than in any other Senecan drama (see Denooz, 519). This is not surprising, since the drama revolves around the piety (or lack of it) of the Theban royal house: Oedipus is obsessed by his own impiety, Antigone is the embodiment of filial piety, the brothers are the very opposite, and Jocasta repeatedly urges them to be pious. The terms *pius* and *pietas* in *Phoen.* refer primarily to family piety, although, when they are used in the context of the fraternal conflict (as at 381, 451, 455, 585), they appear to include the notion of loyalty to Thebes. *Pietas* towards the gods is nowhere explicitly mentioned, but it hovers near the surface, particularly in 451 and in 455, where *pietas* is said to be *sancta.*

Fortuna, cedis? *Credis*, which has MS consensus, is not completely satisfactory. *Fortuna, credis?* must mean 'Is it Fortune, do you think?', which not only supposes the omission of the verb (not characteristic of Senecan drama, and particularly troubling in an ambiguous context), but which demands, at least by implication, a negative answer, which does not follow. Nor would it help to punctuate the sentence as a statement. *Cedis* is the conjecture of P. von Winterfeld (*Schedae criticae in scriptores et poetas Romanas* (Berlin, 1895), 25). It appeals because *Fortuna, cedis?* gains point from being an inversion of the sentiment, common in Senecan drama, that man must yield to

fatc, against which he is powerless (cf., e.g., *Oedip.* 980–94, *Thyest.* 615–22). C.E. Stuart ('The Tragedies of Seneca. Notes and Emendations' *CQ* 5 (1911), 32–41 at 41) points, moreover, to the commonplace nature of the error by which *cedis* would become *credis*, citing Sen. *Oedip.* 980 and *Herc. Fur.* 1342 (*E*), as comparable cases.

82–4 aliquis est ex me pius?/ non esset umquam, fata bene noui mea The topos 'like father, like son' goes back as far as Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 235 τίκτουσιν δὲ γυναῖκες ἐοικότα τέκνα γονεῦσιν, where, as M.L. West (*Hesiod: Works and Days* (Oxford, 1978)) observes *ad loc.*, the point is that the physical resemblance proves the legitimacy of the offspring. West cites as parallels in Latin literature: Catull. 61.214–23; Hor. *Od.* 4.5.23; Mart. 6.27.3–4. He also cites Ter. *Heaut.* 1018–20; Ov. *Trist.* 4.5.31–2, *Pont.* 2.8.31–2 as instances where the similarity of character between offspring and parents is proof of the legitimacy of the child, or, alternatively, of the virtue of the mother. In all the above examples, similarity of physical appearance or of character is adduced to prove legitimacy; here Seneca inverts the traditional form of the topos by making Oedipus question Antigone's origins, since she is so *unlike* him and the rest of her line. This is particularly striking, since, despite the horror surrounding Antigone's begetting, the one thing which is not at issue is her legitimacy.

84–5 ipsa se in leges nouas/ natura uertet For the idea, cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 371, 943; *Agam.* 34.

A reads *uertet*, *E uertit.* Which reading one favours would seem to depend largely on how one punctuates *ipsa . . . uertit/ uertet.* If it is taken as a question, parallel to those in 82 – in this case *regeret in fontem citas* etc. (85–9) becomes an elliptical answer: '[No, because if that is so] the river will . . . ' –, it seems reasonable to read *uertit* (present) to conform with *cedis* and *est* (82). If one takes it as a statement (so Zwierlein, OCT), introducing and forming part of the adynaton which develops from it, it makes sense to read *uertet*, since the verbs which follow – *regeret* (85), *afferet* (86), *faciet* (87) – are all in the future. There is little to choose between the two possibilities, but *uertet* has in its favour the fact that 84 *ipsa*-85 *uertet* is rhetorically more powerful as a statement than as a question.

84 leges nouas *Nouas* here = 'new' rather than 'strange' (as at 15 and 23), the point being that any alteration to the supposedly constant laws of nature would be extraordinary. The term 'natural

law' in the Stoic sense of a general law which transcends the laws of men is first used by Aristotle in *Rhet.* 1373b2 (see E.R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959) on Plato *Grg.* 483e3). In Seneca, the movement of the planets is said to be ordained by the law of nature (*Helu.* 6.8), as is death (*Ep.* 101.14, *QN.* 6.32.12, *Helu.* 13.2). We read also that being evil for the pleasure of it is against nature's law (*Ben.* 4.17.3); that the law of nature is to avert hunger, thirst, and cold (*Ep.* 4.10); that liquids in the earth are produced in accordance with the law of nature (*QN.* 3.15.3); that laws of nature exist under the earth also (*QN.* 3.16.4).

85–6 regeret in fontem citas/ reuolutus undas amnis The idea of a river flowing backwards to its source, symbolising the reversal of the natural order, has its origin in Greek: cf. E. *Med.* 410 ἄνω ποταμῶν ἱερῶν χωροῦσι παγαί; also E. *Supp.* 520–1, where it is found in an adynaton). In Latin verse, rivers that flow backwards are commonplace (see Otto, *flumen* 5) and tend to fall into two categories: those that occur as illustrations of the power of magic or supernatural action over nature (so, e.g., Tib. 1.2.44; Hor. *Od.* 1.2.13–14; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.6, 2.1.26), and those that, as in this case, form part of an emphatic statement or of an adynaton (so Hor. *Od.* 1.29.10ff., Prop. 2.15.33, 3.19.6; Ov. *Her.* 5.30, *Trist.* 1.8–10, *Pont.* 4.5.43, 4.6.45–6). On adynata in general, see NH on Hor. *Od.* 1.29.10, Kenney on Lucr. 3.784–6. On adynata in Senecan drama, see D. & E. Henry, *Mask*, 14–20, who observe that most of the adynata in the plays affirm the strength of a destructive emotion, and not, as here, the persistence of love and devotion.

citas . . . undas Cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 512–13 *fons largus citas/ defundit undas.* The epithet *citas* is significant, because, as Hirschberg observes *ad loc.*, the course of a fast-flowing river would be more difficult to change than that of a sluggish one.

87 Phoebea lampas For the sun as the torch of Phoebus, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.6 *postera Phoebea lustrabat lampade terras*, with Pease *ad loc.*

Hesperus faciet diem *Hesperus/ Vesper* is elsewhere described by Seneca as *gemini praeuia temporis* (*Med.* 71), *dux noctis* (*Med.* 878), *nuntius noctis* (*Phaedr.* 750), *serae nuntius horae* (*Thyest.* 794).

For the traditional adynaton in Senecan drama, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 373–4 *prius/ extinguet ortus, referet occasus diem*; *Phaedr.* 570–1 *ante ab extremo sinu/ Hesperia Tethys lucidum attollet diem*; *Thyest.* 479–80 *lucem dabit/ nox atra terris.*

88–9 meas,/ pii . . . erimus For the use of singular and plural in close proximity without distinction of meaning, cf. also Sen. *Phaedr.* 595–6, *Oedip.* 28–9, *Phoen.* 27–8.

89 pii quoque erimus The climax of the short catalogue of the changes which will be effected by the reversal of nature's law owes its rhetorical impact to the fact that it is a παρὰ προσδοκίαν: *miserias* in 88 leads one to expect something else – some further family disaster perhaps – since the acquisition of *pietas* would not usually be considered a *miseria.* However, Oedipus is in no way usual: he is, as he has just pointed out, part of a *nefanda domus,* from which nothing good can be anticipated, and as such he cannot be expected to display the reactions and feelings common among men. He is also a man so frenziedly obsessed by his own guilt and pollution that he begins to exult in his impiety; cf. 332–3, where Oedipus similarly revels in the wickedness of his sons.

89–90 unica Oedipodae est salus,/ non esse saluum This is a clear imitation of the Vergilian verse, *una salus uictis nullam sperare salutem* (*Aen.* 2.354), cited in Sen. *QN.* 6.2.2, of which there are echoes also in Sen. *Troad.* 453 (*haec una est salus*) and Sen. *Oedip.* 108–9 (*Una iam superest salus,/ si quam salutis Phoebus ostendat uiam*). Seneca quotes the Vergilian verse in *QN.* 6.2.2 to back up his argument that despair brings its own comfort, that of freedom from fear. Here Oedipus is saying that he will be pious and that the only way for him to achieve piety is to die, and so to avenge his father (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 934 *mors innocentem sola Fortunae eripit*).

89 Oedipodae Oedipus' reference to himself in the third person (cf. also 313) is a distancing device, as Hirschberg observes *ad loc.* *Oedipodae* implies 'for such a one as Oedipus': Oedipus is seeing himself from the position of an outsider as a freak of nature.

90 adhuc inultum Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 998 and 1002, where Oedipus, having blinded himself, says *iusta persolui patri* and *nil, parricida, dexterae debes tuae.* Subsequently, his rejection of Jocasta causes her to kill herself, and Oedipus is plunged into guilt again. At the end of *Oedip.*, it is his crime against his mother that Oedipus feels he has not paid for; his debt to his father has been settled (*Oedip.* 1043–5).

91–2 dextra quid cessas iners/ exigere poenas? A common rhetorical feature of both Republican and Senecan drama (see Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 198) is the apostrophe in which a speaker urges himself

on to action; cf. the following instances with *cessas*: *Herc. Fur.* 1283–4, *Troad.* 870, *Med.* 895, *Agam.* 198; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 842. For further examples of this kind of apostrophe in the tragedies, see Canter, 144.

For the expression *dextra iners*, cf. Sen. *Agam.* 551 *aliena inerti tela iaculantem manu* and *Phoen.* 173 *inertem dexteram introrsus preme.*

92 quicquid exactum est adhuc The position of *adhuc*, following rather than preceding *exactum est*, is emphatic: Oedipus is making it clear that he has not yet finished with his self-punishment. Contrast Sen. *Troad.* 286–7 *exactum satis/ poenarum et ultra est.*

93 mitte genitoris manum Oedipus' words, *mitte genitoris manum*, seem to be a deliberate echo of those spoken by Antigone at 61, *manum hanc remittam*, and Seneca makes Oedipus continue by dismissing as mistaken the notion of filial piety which prompted Antigone's declaration of loyalty to her father. Oedipus should be imagined as trying to free himself impatiently from Antigone's determined clasp.

94 animosa A favourite Senecan epithet, found both in the dramas and in the prose works: cf., e.g., *Herc. Fur.* 201 *uirtus animosa*, *Phoen.* 444–5 *iuuentus . . . /animosa*, *Troad.* 588 *animosa . . . mater*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 977 *animosa coniunx*; also *Ep.* 104.4, 110.18, *Ira* 1.11.3, *Ben.* 2.16.1, *Clem.* 2.2.3. For an exhaustive list, see Busa and Zampolli, 89–90.

94–5 funus extendis meum/ longasque uiui ducis exsequias patris Cf. Ov. *Pont.* 1.9.51–2 *tibi exsequias et . . . funus . . . / fecit*; Plin. *Ep.* 3.16.4 *ita funus parauit, ita duxit exsequias.*

The word order of 95 is illustrative of a common pattern in Senecan drama: a verb enclosed by two interlocked noun-adjective pairs. Canter, 175, estimates the average occurrence of this combination as being one in every forty-three verses. Further examples in *Phoen.* occur at 132, 254, 440, 568.

96 aliquando terra corpus inuisum tege Oedipus' request to be buried continues the image (found in 94–5) of him as a living corpse. This is found also in Sen. *Oedip.* 945–51 and may ultimately be derived from S. *OT.* 1367–8. Cf. also Stat. *Theb.* 614–18.

98 patrem insepultum trahere Seneca here appears to play on the Romans' sense of duty with regard to the burial of relatives (cf. Cat. 101; Verg. *Aen.* 6.149–55, 11.185–6).

98–9 qui cogit mori/ . . . impedit This is Oedipus' contribution

to the debate on suicide and his counter-argument to Antigone's *tantis in malis uinci mori est.* He tells her that she is in effect a murderess if she insists on keeping him alive, which again raises the question of whether Oedipus would appropriately commit suicide (see on 77–9).

99 in aequo est Cf. Sen. *Ben.* 2.29.2 *naturam oderint, quod infra deos sumus, quod non in aequo illis stetimus.* According to *TLL*, this is the only occurrence of *in aequo esse* (or *ponere* or *stare*) in Latin poetry. Nor is the expression very common in prose in general, although it occurs frequently in the Senecan dialogues (see *TLL* 2.1034.22–40).

100 occidere est uetare cupientem mori This verse, as C.O. Brink (*Horace on Poetry* (Cambridge, 1971), 428) notes, seems to be an imitation by Seneca in a serious context of Hor. *AP.* 467 *qui seruat, idem facit occidenti*, where the tone is one of 'mocking sentimentality' (cf. also Hor. *Ep.* 1.20.16, where, likewise, the idea occurs in a light-hearted context, and Sen. *Contr.* 8.4, where the context is a serious one, dealing with the question of whether a man who kills himself should be left unburied like a homicide.). Seneca expresses this sentiment also at *Ep.* 77.7 *tam mali exempli esse occidere dominum quam prohibere.* But cf. *Ben.* 2.14.4, where Seneca, claiming that one should not grant the requests of petitioners without first considering whether they will benefit from what is granted, says: *Quemadmodum pulcherrimum opus est etiam inuitos nolentesque seruare, ita rogantibus pestifera largiri blandum et adfabile odium est.*

Leo deleted this verse on the grounds that 101 closely follows 99, and, more importantly, that 100 is not a natural corollary of 98–9: *non dicit Oedipus mortem infligere eum qui quem a morte prohibeat . . . sed crimen idem esse necantis inuitum et seruantis* (*Obs. Crit.*, 209–10). Others, too, have been been unhappy about this verse: Tachau, followed by Peiper-Richer, put it after 101, which does not answer Leo's objections. Most modern editors, however, have left the verse where it stands, Zwierlein (1966), 686, followed by Hirschberg, being a notable exception.

Leo does not account for the supposed interpolation, and his objections to it are not convincing in terms of the declamatory nature of Senecan drama, in which the striving for dramatic effect takes precedence over all else, including pure logic. Certainly 101 smoothly follows 99, and 100 interrupts the sequence *in aequo est . . . nec tamen in aequo est*, but 100 is not to be deleted for that reason. It is an elaboration of the thought expressed in 98–9, specifically of that contained

in the second part of 99, *quique properantem impedit,* and an example of the florid repetitiveness characteristic of declamation (see also on 112). *Occidere est uetare cupientem mori* is a neat *sententia,* a clever imitation of an Horatian verse (cf. Seneca's imitation of Vergil in 89–90), and it fits sufficiently well into the context.

101 alterum grauius reor For the topos that being forced to live can be worse than death itself, cf. S. *El.* 1007–8 οὐ γὰρ θανεῖν ἔχθιστον, ἀλλ'ὅταν θανεῖν/ χρῄζων τις εἶτα μηδὲ τοῦτ'ἔχῃ λαβεῖν E. *Tro.* 637 τοῦ ζῆν δὲ λυπρῶς κρεῖσσον ἐστι κατθανεῖν; Ov. *Her.* 10.82 *morsque . . . minus poenae quam mora mortis habet*; Sen. *Contr.* 8.4 *Quid est in uita miserius quam mori uelle?*; Sen. *Agam.* 996 *Mortem aliquid ultra est? Vita, si cupias mori* (with Tarrant *ad loc.*).

103 desiste coepto Cf. Luc. 3.143–4 *cum Cotta Metellum/ compulit audaci nimium desistere coepto*; Front. *Strat.* 3.6.4 *simulauit se coepto desistere.* The expression, as Hirschberg observes *ad loc.*, is a variation of the common *desistere incepto.*

ius uitae ac necis For the expression, cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 608.

104 regna deserui libens On the significance of the voluntary abdication of Oedipus, see Intro., 25–6.

105 fida . . . comes A *comes* is conventionally *fidus* in Latin poetry: cf., e.g., Tib. 1.5.63; Sen. *Troad.* 83; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 601; Luc. 5.804; Stat. *Silu.* 2.3.23–4, *Theb.* 9.205, 12.405. Oedipus here picks up Antigone's words (53–73) and uses them in his own argument, as he does also at 93 (see note *ad loc.*). This interlocking of speeches argues against the theory of Leo and others that *Phoen.* consists of a series of independent speeches composed for decalmation (see Intro., 3 n.13).

Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 284 notes that Seneca preferred *fidus* to *fidelis* in his dramas: he uses *fidus* twenty times and *fidelis* five times (see Denooz, 487), whereas in Roman comedy the figures are almost exactly reversed.

106–7 sed notum nece/ ensem paterna Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 769 and S. *OT.* 811, where the murder weapon is said to have been a staff (*stipes,* σκῆπτρον). No weapon is mentioned in the mythological handbooks of Apollodorus and Hyginus, nor do Homer or Diodorus Siculus refer to one. Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that *notus ensis* is a Vergilian expression, citing Verg. *Aen.* 12.759 *nomine quemque uocans notumque efflagitat ensem.*

Sed is used here, as at 110, to elaborate and affirm the idea which precedes it; it has the sense of 'and in fact', 'and what is more' (see *OLD sed* 3a).

107–8 an gnati tenent/ cum regno et illum The tone of these words is bitter, which does not accord with *regna deserui libens* (104). Probably the answer is to be found in 108–10, where the conflict between the brothers is alluded to: Oedipus abdicated willingly, but when his sons began to quarrel over the throne, he became embittered towards them.

108–10 This is the second allusion in the 'crescendo of reference' to the fraternal conflict (see on 53–8) and the first by Oedipus. Again the allusion is brief but significant: it makes clear that Oedipus has little love for either of his sons, thus foreshadowing both his refusal to intervene in the strife between them and his words in 355: *frater in fratrem ruat.*

The thought of his quarelling sons drives Oedipus into a frenzy. In the previous lines he has been almost calm, reasoning with Antigone and trying to persuade her to let him die, but at this point his mood changes, and he plunges again into an urgent desire for action and death (cf. the mood change from 11 to 12). It is by such sudden changes of tone and mood that Seneca is able to prevent his long speeches from dragging intolerably.

108 faciet, ubicumque est, opus *E* has *opus*, *A* has *scelus*. *Scelus* is attractive because it is more direct than *opus*, and because *scelus* is thematic in the play as a whole. However, it is difficult to see why *scelus* should have been corrupted to *opus*, although the reverse process might easily have occurred for the above reasons. *Opus* not only makes complete sense – the *opus* of a sword being to commit a *scelus* (see Hirschberg *ad loc.* for parallels) – but is supported by Senecan usage elsewhere (see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 117). It therefore seems right to accept the *lectio difficilior*, as all recent editors have done.

110–14 The introduction at this point of a funeral pyre, following closely upon the mention of a sword as a means of suicide, recalls Dido's death in Verg. *Aen.* 4 (see esp. 504–8 and 645–7).

110 uastum aggerem For the combination, cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 1015 *consurgit ingens pontus in uastum aggerem.* The use of *agger* to denote a funeral pyre seems to have originated with Ovid (see Bömer on Ov. *Met.* 9.234) and is fairly common in Latin poetry subsequently: cf.

Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1216; Luc. 2.300; Val. Fl. 3.337; Stat. *Theb.* 6.58, 12.62, *Silu.* 3.3.36.

112 haerebo ad ignes, funebri abscondar strue *E* has *haerebo ad ignes, funebre escendam struem*, *A* reads *erectam ad ignes, funebrem ascendam struem.* The restoration of *-m* to *funebre* renders the version of *E* intelligible, whereas *erectam* in *A* makes no sense.

However, aside from textual difficulties, the verse is peculiar. Richter deleted it on the grounds of superfluity, never a strong argument in Senecan drama, given its characteristic of over-emphasis and repetition. Nor is Zwierlein's objection (*Krit. Komm.*, 117) that 'Seneca kennt nirgend *haerere ad*' compelling, since the expression occurs elsewhere in Latin poetry: Billerbeck, 78 n.183, cites Catull. 21.6 *haerens ad latus* [*pueri*]; Prop. 4.1.110 *bene haerentis ad pia saxa ratis*; Val. Fl. 3.641 *supplex haeret ad ora ducis*, and A. Hudson-Williams ('Notes on Some Passages in Seneca's Tragedies: II' *CQ* 41 (1991), 427–37 at 428) notes that the expression occurs only once in each of these poets, as in Seneca. He points out, too, that Seneca's departure from the normal usage, in which the fires would be the subject, is to suit the context: Oedipus is not the victim of the fires, but, eager for death as he is, he actively seeks to embrace them (cf. the example from Propertius).

The difficulties lie elsewhere. Firstly, the order of events envisaged in 111–12 seems absurd: first Oedipus will hurl himself onto the pyre, then he will cling to the fire, then he will climb the pyre. Secondly, while the first part of 112, *haerebo ad ignes*, is macabrely effective, the second part, *funebrem escendam struem*, is a weak repetition of what has already been stated in 111. Since 113 would follow 111 smoothly, it is tempting simply to delete 112 as an interpolation. However, the reason for the interpolation is not apparent. Leo's conjecture, *funebri abscondar strue*, ignored by Zwierlein in the *apparatus* of his OCT, is both ingenious and plausible. The sequence of Oedipus' imagined actions now makes sense, with each element being more extreme than the preceding one: first he will hurl himself onto the pyre, then he will cling to the flames, then he will be buried in the pyre. The corruption of *abscondar* to *ascendam* or *escendam* would be easy enough, particularly since *ascendo/ escendo* is readily associated with funeral pyres, and the change of case to fit the change of verb would follow naturally. *Funebre* of *E* may, in fact, be an intermediate stage between *funebri* and *funebrem.*

113 pectusque soluam durum For the expression, cf. Ov. *Met.*

14.693, 758; Sen. *Ben.* 1.3.1; Luc. 10.7–12. *Durus* here has the sense of 'stubborn', i.e. in that Oedipus has been clinging to life (cf. 142, where Oedipus describes his soul as *cum morte luctantem diu*). It seems unlikely that *pectus durum* is to be taken literally (= 'hard chest/ ribcage') as Hirschberg *ad loc.* suggests. He cites as parallels Sen. *Thyest.* 750 [*functos*] . . . *nec soluat ignis* and Luc. 9.142–3 *an furtiuus, quem uidimus, ignis/ soluerit, ignoro*, but in both these cases the subject of the verb is *ignis*, which makes it clear that the verb must have the sense of 'destroy' or 'consume'. This need not be so here, and, furthermore, the combination *pectus durum* does not occur elsewhere in a literal sense.

in cinerem dabo The expression *in cinerem/ -es do* occurs also in [Verg.] *Cul.* 313–14, Sen. *Troad.* 739 (which has *cinerem*, and which Zwierlein, OCT, cites in support of *cinerem* here), and Sil. 6.716. In the first two cases, it appears to mean 'reduce to ashes', while in Sil. 6.716, *in cineres monumenta date atque inuoluite flammis*, it has the sense of 'throw into the fire'. Here, it seems that it would be best to translate *in cinerem dabo* as 'I shall reduce to ashes', since Oedipus has already stated that he is going to throw himself onto the pyre, i.e. into the fire.

114 hoc quicquid in me uiuit See on 47–8.

saeuum . . . mare A *placidum . . . mare* would be just as effective for drowning oneself in, but it is in keeping with Oedipus' mood of guilt, anger, and despair that the sea should be *saeuum* (cf. 116 *torua . . . uada*).

114–16 Oedipus is echoing Antigone's words at 67–71: *saeuum mare* (114) corresponds to *subiecti maris* (68), line 115 to line 67, *rapidus Ismenos* (116) to *rapax torrens* (71), the repetition of *ubi* and *duc* to the repetition of *hic* and *uis hanc* (67–71).

115 duc *Duc* (*E*) here, as in 117, is to be preferred to *dic* (*A*) in view of *si dux es* in 118, in combination with which *dic* would make little sense.

116 rapidus . . . Ismenos Rivers are commonly *rapidus* in Latin poetry: cf., e.g., Plaut. *Men.* 64, *Bacch.* 85; Catull. 63.16; Tib. 1.2.44; Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.242; Ov. *Met.* 2.637; Sen. *Med.* 411. Elsewhere in Senecan drama, however, very different epithets are used of the Ismenos: *tenuis* (*Oedip.* 42), *tacitum* (*Agam.* 319); cf. *languidus* ([Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 141). Tarrant (on *Agam.* 318ff.) suggests that Seneca was perhaps influenced here by Ov. *Met.* 2.244, where the Ismenos is described as

celer. A fast-flowing and therefore dangerous Ismenos is clearly more appropriate to the context.

torua . . . uada Neither Lipsius' emendation of *torua* to *torta,* nor Gronovius' conjecture, *curua,* have found favour with modern editors, and with good reason: *torua* has MS consensus, *toruus* is not uncommon in Senecan drama (Denooz, 540, records fifteen occurrences), there is a parallel for its application to a river (cf. Val. Fl. 8.218–19 . . . *toruus ubi . . . / in freta . . . Hister descendit*), and to describe the Ismenos, quite a small river, as having *torua uada* is characteristic Senecan exaggeration. See also 114 on *saeuum mare* and Zwierlein (1980), 183 n.7.

uoluat There is MS consensus on *ducat,* which Peiper emended to *uoluat,* presumably because it suggests more vigorous movement and is thus more appropriate than the calm *ducat* to a river said to be *torua* and *rapidus.* Zwierlein (OCT), in defence of *ducat,* cites *Phoen.* 604 and *Oedip.* 469, in which *traho* and *deduco* respectively are applied to the flow of the Pactolus. This river, however, is in neither place described as turbulent, fast-flowing, angry, *uel sim..* Thus the comparison is not useful. Peiper's *uoluat* appeals, and the corruption is easily explicable as resulting from the proximity of *duc* (115 and 117).

117 duc ubi ferae sint, ubi fretum, ubi praeceps locus Heinsius deleted 117, but although it is largely repetitive – *ferae* is the only new element introduced into the catalogue – there seems to be no compelling reason to get rid of it. It makes good sense, and it takes one back to Oedipus' first outburst of longing for death in 12–26, to the *ferae* (Actaeon's dogs and Zethus' bull) and to the *fretum* into which Ino leapt from a *praeceps locus.* See further Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.,* 117–18; Hirschberg *ad loc..*

Zwierlein (OCT) reads *sunt* here with *E,* but *sint* of *A* gains support from *sit* (115) and *uoluat/ducat* (116). Although it could be argued that Seneca intended *sunt* as a kind of *uariatio* (for which, however, I have found no parallels elsewhere in Senecan drama), *sunt* probably entered the text under the influence of *es* (118), and Seneca reserved the indicative for emphasis in the final clause of the series.

118–22 illuc (118) . . . huc (120) . . . hic (121) . . . hoc saxum (122) The abundant use of demonstrative pronouns and adjectives is characteristic of Seneca at his most declamatory. The effect is to achieve vividness by creating a sense of immediacy. Cf. 67–8 *hac*

uita . . . hoc aspectu . . . hac manu, 27–30 *istis siluis . . . hunc . . . huc*, 67–71 *hic . . . hanc . . . hic . . . hanc*, 141–4 *hoc animo . . . hanc . . . animam . . . sceleri haec*, 217–20 *manumque hanc . . . hoc caelum . . . hoc solum . . . has auras*; cf. also *Herc. Fur.* 1193–4, 1229–30, *Troad.* 960–5, 1005–7, *Agam.* 900–7, *Thyest.* 1012–17. The use of demonstratives would also give an actor or declaimer scope for dramatic gestures (on this, see also on 498).

119 alta rupe Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 95, where the Sphinx is described as asking her riddle *e superna rupe.*

119–20 semifero . . . ore A transferred epithet: the Sphinx was *semifera* but her mouth was human, since she had the body of a winged lion and the head of a woman.

dolos . . . nectens For the expression, cf. Liv. 1.5.6 *Ita undique regi dolus nectitur*, 27.28.4 *eius signi errore ne qui dolus necteretur a Poeno metuens*; Sen. *Troad.* 927–8 *fare quos Ithacus dolos,/ quae scelera nectat*; Sil. 3.233–4 *at docilis fallendi et nectere tectos/ numquam tarda dolos.* Ogilvie on Liv. 1.5.6 observes that *dolos . . . nectere* 'is no doubt meant to suggest the Greek δόλους ὑφαίνειν'. See also on *nexus* 60.

120 derige huc gressus pedum Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 5.162 and 11.855 *huc derige gressum.* All the MSS read *dirige* here and at 163 (*dirigam* at 62). Zwierlein prints *de-*, which M.J. Dewar (rev. of R. Lesueur, *Stace,* Thebaïde, *Livres V–VIII*, *CR* 42 (1992), 194) shows to be the correct spelling: *dirigo* is not attested in inscriptions before the fourth century AD. Its presence in the MSS is no doubt the result of scribal alteration to make it conform with contemporary pronunciation.

121 dira sedes Cf. Stat. *Theb.* 8.241–2 *diraque . . . in sede latentem/ Oedipoden.*

122 monstrum repone maius See on 60. Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 641, where Oedipus refers to himself as *magisque monstrum Sphinge perplexum sua.* The conceit appears to be Senecan.

hoc saxum insidens The mistake of *A*, where *saxo* occurs, is easily explained, since *insideo* is more commonly followed by the dative. The accusative, however, is also well-attested: cf. Stat. *Silu.* 5.2.167 *patrias dabit insedisse curules*; Tac. *Ann.* 3.61.13 *supplicibus Amazonum quae aram insiderant ignouisse*; Apul. *Met.* 9.32.1 *dorsum insidens meum.*

124–31 Enumerations of this sort are common in Senecan drama: in 12–25 the dreadful deeds which have taken place on Cithaeron are listed, in 420–6 the agents needed to carry Jocasta swiftly to the battlefield are enumerated, in 602–13 Jocasta names the places where

Polyneices could find himself a kingdom (for examples in the other dramas, see Canter, 75–6). In this instance, the rhetorical device creates suspense, since the main clause, *aduerte mentem* (131), which states the purpose for which all the different people are being summoned, is delayed until the very end of the catalogue. Also, the catalogue creates a gap between *hoc saxum insidens/ obscura . . . uerba . . . loquor* (122–3) and the *obscura uerba* themselves (134–7), so that the fact that Oedipus has got nowhere near the Sphinx' rock by the time he utters the riddle is not so obvious.

Seneca's selection of places in this passage was clearly not made with any central idea in mind, since the areas mentioned are unconnected, except insofar as they are all relatively close to Thebes, which itself forms part of the catalogue. Contrast the hunting aria at the beginning of Sen. *Phaedr.* (1–30), where the list of geographical references is carefully composed and limited to places in Attica.

124–5 Assyrio loca/ possessa regi I.e. Thebes. The *Assyrius rex* is Cadmus; his father was Agenor, king of Tyre, hence the epithet *Assyrius*, since in the eighth and seventh centuries BC Tyre was part of the Assyrian Empire.

125–6 nemus/ serpente notum When Cadmus founded Cadmeia, later Thebes, he killed the dragon which guarded the nearby spring (Apollod. 3.4.1; Paus. 9.10.1; Hyg. *Fab.* 178; Ov. *Met.* 3.26–94). The *nemus* here referred to must be the one in which the spring was believed to have been.

Serpente notum = 'well-known because of the serpent': for the ablative expressing the source of fame, cf. Ov. *Met.* 1.198 *notus feritate Lycaeon*; Luc. 2.591 *noti . . . erepto uellere Colchi*; Tac. *Ann.* 15.53 *Pisonem notum amore uxoris.*

quo . . . latet Heinsius proposed *quod . . . lauat* (cf. Sen. *Troad.* 384 [*Oceanus*] . . . *bis ueniens et fugiens lauat*, *Oedip.* 714 *lauitque Dirce Tyrios colonos*). There seems, however, to be no compelling reason to emend the text: the use of *lateo* (= 'lie hidden') is well-attested in poetry (see *TLL* 7.996.31–41); *quo* = *ubi* is found also at Sen. *Troad.* 408 *quo non nata iacent* and 482 *quo lateat infans* (see LHS 2.277, where its use in late Latin is noted). For the association of Dirce with the grove of Cadmus, see also Sen. *Oedip.* 712–14.

127 Eurotan bibis The Eurotas was a long river which flowed through the whole length of Laconia. The topos of designating the inhabitants of a region as drinking from the local river goes back to Homer: cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.825 πίνοντες ὕδωρ μέλαν Αἰσήποιο; also Pind.

Ol. 6.85–6 Θήβαν . . . τάς ἐρατεινὸν ὕδωρ/πιόμαι (for further references, see Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 318ff.).

128 Spartenque fratre nobilem gemino On the form *Spartenque*, see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 365; Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 119. According to one tradition, Castor and Pollux were both born of Jupiter to Leda, wife of Tyndareus of Sparta (*Hymn. Hom.* 17.1–4, 33.1–6), according to another, Pollux (or Polydeuces) was Leda's son by Jupiter, while Castor was fathered by Tyndareus (Pind. *Nem.* 10.80). They were especially worshipped in Sparta.

fratre . . . gemino In Latin poetry the singular of *geminus* is sometimes used for the plural: cf. Hor. *Od.* 3.29.64 *geminusque Pollux*; Ov. *Fast.* 4.810 *gemino sub duce*; Sen. *Phaedr.* 275 *geminus Cupido*; Val. Fl. 2.427 *gemino a Castore.*

130 agros uberis tondes soli For the metaphor, cf. Verg. *Georg.* 1.71 *Alternis idem tonsas cessare noualis/ . . . patiere*, 1.89–90 *nocte arida prata tondentur*, 4.277 *tonsis in uallibus illum/ pastores legunt*; Tib. 3.7(4.1).172 *tondeturque seges maturos annua partus*; Ov. *Rem. Am.* 192 *et tonsam raro pectine uerrit humum.*

131 saeua Thebarum lues Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 107–8, where Oedipus, referring to the continuing influence of the Sphinx, says: *illa nunc Thebas lues/ perempta perdit.*

132 luctifica There are five occurrences in Senecan drama of this fairly rare, and almost exclusively poetic, word: cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 102, *Phaedr.* 995, *Oedip.* 3, 632. For examples elsewhere, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.324; Val Fl. 3.292; Stat. *Theb.* 10.552; Sil. 6.557. On the origin and use of the compound adjective, see Billerbeck, 13 para. 20.

caecis uerba committens modis Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 92 *caecis uerba nectentem modis.* Ogilvie on Liv. 1.57.6 observes that to use *modis* with an adjective instead of using an adverb is most uncommon after Plautus and Terence.

133 posuit *Pono* here = 'pose', 'propound', as in Cic. *De Or.* 1.102 *mihi uos . . . quaestiunculam . . . ponitis?*, *Fam.* 9.26.1 *tu unum* ζήτημα *Dioni philosopho posuisti.*

inextricabile = 'insoluble': cf. Plin. *HN.* 2.85, where certain mathematical calculations are described as *incomperta . . . et inextricabilia.* Hirschberg *ad loc.* notes that *inextricabilis* occurs first in poetry in Verg. *Aen.* 6.27, where it is used of a labyrinth. This is one of the fifteen words in Senecan drama which consist of more than four syllables;

cf. 165 *inexpugnabilem*, and see Drexler, *röm. Metr.*, 137, for instances in the other plays.

134–7 Cf. Sen. *Agam.* 984–5, where Electra calls Aegisthus *per scelera natus, nomen ambiguum suis,/ idem sororis gnatus et patris nepos*; also Cic. *Clu.* 199, where it is said of Sassia: *Atque etiam nomina necessitudinum, non solum naturae nomen et iura mutauit: uxor generi, nouerca filii, filiae paelex*, and Ov. *Met.* 10.347–8, of Myrrha, who fell in love with her father Cinyras, *tune eris et matris paelex et adultera patris?/ tune soror nati genetrixque uocabere fratris?*

134 aui gener By marrying Jocasta, Oedipus became her father's (his grandfather's) son-in-law. Jocasta's father plays no part in the legend of Oedipus and his troubles; he is introduced here simply to make the riddle more complicated.

135 frater . . . fratrum The repetition of *frater*, which refers to different people in each instance (first Oedipus, then Eteocles and Polyneices) stresses the confusion of the family relationships. The chiasmus highlights this.

136 uiro Seneca uses the more general term, *uir*, rather than the specific, *coniunx*, in order to emphasise the ambiguity of Oedipus' relationship with Jocasta (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 1009).

137 sibi et Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 44) observes that the inversion of *et* occurs only rarely in Senecan drama and usually in the choral odes. The effect here is clearly to throw emphasis on *sibi*.

monstra quis tanta explicet For *explico* used in the sense of attempting to explain something beyond one's comprehension, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.361–2 *quis funera fando/ explicet?*; Apul. *Met.* 4.13 *qui singulas species apparatus multiiugi uerbis idoneis posset explicare?* The subjunctive is supported by Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 258 *quis satis Thebas fleat?* and *Thyest.* 684 *quis queat digne eloqui?* (so Zwierlein, OCT).

Monstra tanta is ambiguous: it could refer to the situations mentioned by Oedipus – the son's being a rival to his father, the brother's being both the brother and the parent of his children, etc. – or it could refer to the actual people involved in the bizarre tangle of relationships, i.e. it could be translated either as 'such awful happenings' or as 'such monstrous creatures'. The former option is more attractive, since Oedipus is not concerned with the monstrousness of the other members of his family, but only with the genetic chaos perpetrated by him.

138 ego ipse Emphatic (cf. 111 *ipse me*), with a concessive flavour; trans. 'even I'.

uictae spolia . . . Sphingis = '[who took] spoils from the Sphinx'. For this genitive of separation with *spolia*, cf. also Liv. 1.10.5 *spolia ducis hostium caesi suspensa*; Cic. *Manil.* 55 *classium spoliis*; Verg. *Aen.* 12.94 *Actoris Aurunci spolium*; Sen. *Agam.* 176 *Zminthea tenuit spolia Phoebei senis.*

For Oedipus' pride in his conquest of the Sphinx, cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 92–102.

139 haerebo fati tardus interpres mei *Haerebo . . . tardus* is pleonastic; trans. '[Even I] shall hesitate and shall be slow to explain my fate'.

For *interpres*, cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 444, where Oedipus is referred to as *Sphingi interpres.*

140–81 Peiper-Richter and others have held that this fresh outburst by Oedipus is a response to a speech by Antigone that has been lost in transmission, and therefore have supposed a lacuna in the text between 139 and 140. Oedipus' sudden change of mood at 140 is striking – from brooding over the similarity between the riddling Sphinx and the genetic riddle he has created, Oedipus reverts to an active desire for death. Striking too is his abrupt turning back to Antigone with *Quid perdis ultra uerba?* However, as Mesk, 312, and Paul, 38, have pointed out, Oedipus' impatient questions could quite well be a response to Antigone's last words at 77–9, and Paul has observed that they mark Seneca's return to the dialogue form after Oedipus' virtual monologue from 110–39. One may compare *Phaedr.* 559, for example, where Hippolytus reverts to the subject of women, raised by the Nurse, after a seeming digression on the delights of the simple life of the woods. One may argue also that allusion to the tangled horror of Oedipus' incest at 134–7 naturally inspires the further thought that, in the light of this horror, Antigone's attempt to dissuade Oedipus from his proposed suicide must be futile.

140 quid perdis ultra uerba? Despite the difference in mood, this question would appear to serve a similar purpose in the second person singular to the kind of question in the first person that is common in rhetoric, and which is generally used to introduce a further series of details on the same subject as before: cf., e.g., Cic. *Verr.* 2.119 *Quid porro argumenter . . . ?*; *Clu.* 59 *Quid est quod iam . . . plura dicamus?*

141–3 hoc animo/ . . . hanc . . . / animam This type of paronomasia is fairly rare in Senecan drama: cf. *Herc. Fur.* 1184–5 *tuique nominis semper mihi/ numen secundum*, *Troad.* 301–2 *O tumide, rerum dum secundarum status/ extollit animos, timide cum increpuit metus* (see Canter, 161).

142 cum morte luctantem diu *Luctor* is first used to describe a struggle between life and death in Verg. *Aen.* 4.694–5 . . . *Irim demisit Olympo/ quae luctantem animam nexosque resolueret artus*; cf. also Ov. *Ib.* 125–6; Luc. 3.578. Oedipus' *anima* has been struggling with death for a long time in that, as a result of the oracular utterance to Laius, he was under sentence of death already in the womb.

143 sceleri meo Oedipus does not here appear to be referring specifically to one of his two crimes against his parents, but rather to his general state of guilt.

The consistency with which *ego* and *meus* in their various forms occur in emphatic positions in Oedipus' speeches (cf. 30, 31–2, 44, 84, 88, 94, 102, 104, 109, 111, 138, 139) is not fortuitous: by this device, Seneca suggests the obsessive self-absorption of the potential suicide.

143–4 tenebras . . . nox There is some clever word-play here: *tenebrae* and *nox* are virtual synonyms for darkness and night, yet each is used here in a sense other than the obvious one, with the result that the apparent similarity makes the actual divergence in sense more telling.

Tenebras = 'death'; so Prop. 2.20.17 [*iuro*] . . . *me tibi ad extremas mansurum, uita, tenebras*; Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 280 *abrumpe tenebras*. *Nox* here clearly means blindness (cf. also Ov. *Met.* 3.335, 6.473, 7.2, 7.835; Sen. *Oedip.* 1049; Stat. *Theb.* 1.47).

However, *nox* is traditionally also used in Latin poetry as a metaphor for death (cf., e.g., Catull. 5.6; Verg. *Aen.* 6.390, 6.462, 6.866, 10.746; Prop. 2.15.24; Hor. *Od.* 1.28.15; Sen. *Oedip.* 5), and Seneca may here also be exploiting this nuance of the word, since the image of Oedipus' existence as a 'living death' is a recurrent one (see on 98).

145 si quid ultra Tartarum Oedipus wishes to be buried beneath Tartarus, because Tartarus itself is not far enough beneath the earth for one as wicked as he. This desire is expressed also by Hercules in Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1223–6 and by Thyestes in Sen. *Thyest.* 1012–16 (Tarrant *ad loc.* compares Ov. *Pont.* 4.14.11–12 *Styx quoque, si quid ea est, bene commutabitur Histro,/ si quid et inferius quam Styga mundus*

habet.). Cf. also Ar. *Frogs* 70, where Dionysus, in response to Heracles' asking whether he is prepared to go down to Hades to find Euripides, replies: καὶ νὴ Δί'εἴ τί γ'ἔστιν ἔτι κατωτέρω. In Sen. *Oedip.* 868–70, by contrast, Oedipus considers it enough to be buried in the depths of Tartarus itself.

145–6 tandem libet/ quod olim oportet Oedipus is saying that death is now, for the first time, to him a pleasure, as it has long been his duty.

146 morte prohiberi haud queo Cf. 103–4 *ius uitae ac necis/ meae penes me est*; also 152–3. For the thought, cf. Mart. 1.42 *mortem non posse negari*; Sen. *Ep.* 70.21 *ad moriendum nihil aliud in mora esse quam uelle*, *Phaedr.* 87 *mortem uolenti deesse mors numquam potest.*

147–9 Seneca lists four possible means of death from which Antigone may keep Oedipus: the sword, falling, the noose, poison. In Ar. *Frogs* 120–33, Heracles suggests to Dionysus three quick ways of reaching Hades – by hanging, by poison, by leaping from a high place. Eduard Fraenkel, 'Selbstmordwege' *Philologus* 87 (1932), 470–3, recognised this as the first expression of the three methods of suicide which were commonly approved and almost proverbial among the ancients (see Schol. *ad* Pind. *Ol.* 1.197 τριῶν οὐσῶν . . . βασάνων δι'ὧν τις ἀπωλλυτο, βρόχου, κωνείου, βαράθρου). Fraenkel, 471, observed further that there was an even more popular triad of *selbstmordwege* which included the sword and omitted hemlock: he cites another scholiast on Pind. *Ol.* 1.197 who says: τρία λέγεται καὶ κοινῶς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θάνατον συνεργοῦντα, ξίφος, ἀγχόνη, κρημνός, and notes the appearance of this triad also in Latin literature, viz. Hor. *Epod.* 17.70–2; Luc. 9.106. Ovid's Phyllis (*Her.* 2.131–44) goes beyond the limits of the traditional triad and considers suicide by leaping (into the sea), by poison, by the sword, or by hanging: she combines all the elements of the two popular triads, just as Seneca's Oedipus does here. There is no reason to assume that Ovid influenced Seneca in this respect, since there are no linguistic correspondences between the two passages, nor are the means of suicide listed in the same order. Since, however, Seneca's choice of methods of suicide is in complete conformity with the literary tradition, it should not be interpreted as having any particular significance within the context of the play.

On the topos of varied means of death, see NH on Hor. *Od.* 1.28.17; Winterbottom on Quint. *Decl.* 260.24.

147 noxias lapsu uias Lit. = 'paths dangerous in point of falling'. For the ablative, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.683–4 *tactuque innoxia mollis/ . . . flamma.* For this sense of *noxius*, cf. Tac. *Hist.* 5.17 *paludes hostibus noxias.*

148 cludes et artis colla laqueis inseri Although forms in *au* are better supported in the MSS than those in *u* (see Tarrant, Sen. *Agam.*, 366), there is MS consensus on *cludes* here (Zwierlein, OCT, 462). This form, although previously rare, becomes fairly common from Seneca onwards (see *TLL* 3.1300.51–75).

This verse is metrically unique in *Phoen.* and one of only ten verses in Senecan drama which end with a cretic where the final word begins with a vowel but there is no elision (the norm in Senecan trimeters which end in a final cretic is for this to be preceded by elision between the fifth arsis and thesis, as, e.g., at *Phoen.* 342); see Strzelecki, 16–19.

149 herbas quae ferunt letum auferes Cf. Sen. *Med.* 270 *letales aufer herbas.*

Heinsius (*Aduers.*, 51) wished to read *ferant* for *ferunt* (cf. 548, where he proposed *petant* for *petunt*), with the subjunctive expressing characteristic. Since, however, both *ferunt* and *petunt*, on which there is MS consensus, make satisfactory sense as they stand, it seems best to regard the relative clause *quae . . . letum* as expressing a simple fact, and to retain the indicative.

150 tandem *Tandem* here conveys Oedipus' irritation; trans. 'for heaven's sake' (cf. Cic. *Cat.* 1.1.1 *Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?*).

151–3 For the topos that there are numerous ways to achieve death, cf. Tib. 1.3.50 *nunc mare, nunc leti mille repente uias*; Sen. *Contr.* 7.1.9 *multas rerum mortis uias aperuit*; 1.8.6 *totidem ad mortem uiae sunt*; Sen. *Ep.* 70.14 *Nil melius aeterna lex fecit, quam quod unum introitum nobis ad uitam dedit, exitus multos*, *Ep.* 12.10 *Patent undique ad libertatem uiae multae, breues, faciles*, *Phaedr.* 475–6 *quam uaria leti genera mortalem trahunt/ carpuntque turbam*; Luc. 3.689 *mille modos inter leti.*

151 ubique mors est: optume hoc cauit deus Such sententious utterance on a particular excellence in the providential arrangement of the world is common in Seneca: cf., e.g., *Ep.* 70.14 *Nil melius aeterna lex fecit, quam quod unum introitum nobis ad uitam dedit, exitus multos*, 12.10 *Agamus Deo gratias, quod nemo in uita teneri potest.*

optume *A* has *optime*, *E optume.* The rarity with which the

form in *u* occurs in Senecan drama suggests that *E* has preserved the correct reading here. Perhaps Seneca favoured the archaism here to suit the religious content of the thought: cf. *Troad.* 486, where, likewise, *A* reads *optime*, *E optume*, and the context is a religious one.

cauit *Cauo* is here used in its legal sense of 'prescribe', 'make provision for': cf. Cic. *Verr.* 1.110 *Quid si plus legarit quam ad heredem heredesue perueniat . . . : cur hoc non caues?*, *Agr.* 3.8–9 *Tu uero, Rulle, quid quaeris? . . . Ut meliore iure tui soceri fundus Hirpinus sit siue ager Hirpinus . . . quam meus paternus auitusque fundus Arpinas? Id enim caues.*

152–3 eripere uitam nemo non homini potest,/ at nemo mortem Antithesis between pairs of clauses is common in Senecan drama: in *Phoen.*, cf., e.g., 76 *si moreris, antecedo, si uiuis, sequor*, 522–4 *nempe nisi bellum foret,/ ego te carerem; nempe si tu non fores,/ bello carerem*, 592–3 *regia frater meus/ habitet superba, parua me abscondat casa* (cf. also 384, 419, 618–9, 632; for examples in other plays, see Canter, 153–4).

153 mille *Mille* here, as commonly in Latin, is hyperbolic (so μυρίος in Greek): cf., e.g., Catull. 5.7 *da mi basia mille, deinde centum*; Hor. *Ep.* 1.6.19 *spectant oculi te mille loquentem.* Seneca, in his dramas, not infrequently uses a definite number (almost invariably inflated for rhetorical effect) rather than an indefinite word, such as *multus* or *saepe*, to indicate amount: so, e.g., *Agam.* 455 (*millesimam*), *Troad.* 820, 1020 (*centum*), *Phaedr.* 551 (*mille*); cf. [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 635, 1388 (*mille*).

154 nil quaero The Latin is very compressed: *nil* here means 'no external means by which I may kill myself'. Oedipus proceeds in the rest of the verse and in the following verse to explain his assertion. This is clever rhetoric: Oedipus alludes to his self-blinding, and then feints away from it, only to return to it with greater intensity at 163.

In *Ep.* 70.21, Seneca declares that lack of a weapon need not prevent a determined man from killing himself; with reference to the German prisoner who choked himself to death with a lavatory sponge, he says: *Undique destitutus inuenit, quemadmodum et mortem sibi deferret et telum, ut scias ad moriendum nihil aliud in mora esse quam uelle.* Cf. also Sen. *Phaedr.* 878 *mortem uolenti deesse mors numquam potest.*

154–5 dextra noster et nuda solet/ bene animus uti *Nuda* = 'without a weapon' (*OLD nudus* 4a); cf. Sen. *Ep.* 24.8 (on Cato's suicide) *sed sibi iratus nudas in uulnus manus egit.* By making Oedipus blind himself by pulling out his eyeballs with his bare hands (cf. also Sen.

Oedip. 961–70), Seneca intensifies the horror of the act which, in S. *OT.*, Oedipus carries out by repeatedy stabbing his eyeballs with Jocasta's brooches (1268–79).

The hyperbaton is effective. The position of *noster* causes stress to fall on *nuda* (already given prominence by the concessive *et*) as a result of the alliteration so achieved; *noster*, placed as it is before *et nuda*, with which it is linked in terms of position and sound (viz. the alliteration), though not of syntax, comes to have an association not only with its rightful substantive, *animus*, but also with *dextra*; the emphatic position of *bene* brings out Oedipus' twisted thinking: *bene* is not a word most people would use to describe an act as grotesque as Oedipus' self-blinding (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 998 *bene habet, peractum est*).

noster . . . animus This periphrasis for *nos* (= *ego*) occurs first in Plautus (cf. *Bacch.* 528 *nam illud animus meus miratur*, *Cist.* 554–5 *animus audire expetit/ ut res gesta sit*; in Senecan drama, cf. *Troad.* 945 *Vide ut animus ingens laetus audierit necem*; *Phaedr.* 448 *exultet animus.*

155 bene animus uti – dextra, nunc toto impetu See on 51 for the significance of the *manus/ dextra* word motif.

This is the only verse in *Phoen.* which begins with a tribrach, and it is one of only three verses with first-foot tribrachs in the Senecan tragic *corpus* (cf. *Agam.* 144, *Thyest.* 192) where the first thesis is formed by a dissyllabic word in elision; in the other twenty–eight verses which begin with a tribrach, the first thesis is always a monosyllable (see Strzelecki, 66–7).

155–6 toto impetu,/ toto dolore, uiribus totis The repetition of *toto* (with variation) is emphatic. The implication, made explicit in 157–8, is that although Oedipus' *dextra* did a good job previously, it was not operating with maximum efficiency, which Oedipus now calls upon it to do. The chiasmus *toto dolore, uiribus totis* is probably due as much to metrical as to rhetorical considerations, since *totis uiribus* would have resulted in a fourth-foot spondee.

155–6 By presenting Oedipus' plan for his own destruction as an apostrophe to the murder weapon, his hand, Seneca makes the horror of the situation still more vivid. The string of imperatives – *ueni* (156), *exige* (158), *effringe* (159), *euelle* (160) – conveys a sense of urgency.

157 non destino unum uulneri nostro locum I.e. as he did previously when he tore out his eyes.

157–8 Oedipus is, with macabre generosity, allowing his hand to

deliver its death-dealing blow in whatever part of his body it wishes, since his whole being has been polluted (*totus nocens sum*) by his parricide and incest.

158 totus nocens sum: mortem exige Cf. 218 *dira fugio scelera quae feci innocens*: Oedipus is *innocens* in that he did not intend to commit his crimes, but *nocens* because he did commit them and, because, in his eyes, ignorance is no excuse.

Poenas/supplicia exigo (cf. also 171 *debitum . . . exige*) is a common expression, but *mortem exige* is rare, being found elsewhere in classical Latin only at Quint. *Decl.* 305.1 (ed. Winterbottom) and Sen. *Ep.* 114.5 (quoting Maecenas).

159–64 This sort of violent description, one of the much-criticised hallmarks of Senecan drama, was probably influenced by declamation (see Bonner, *Rom. Decl.*, 59, 165; cf. *Phaedr.* 1093–1114, *Oedip.* 961–79, *Thyest.* 760–70; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1224–5). It is the type of thing that F.L. Lucas (*Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1922), 63) called 'tasteless barbarism'. Critics, however, tend to ignore that fact that Seneca's goriness is always laced with wit. The wit here consists in seeing the different organs and parts of the body as so many channels for the extraction of Oedipus' life-breath, and in having Oedipus plan for *himself* the savage forms of death which speakers wish on others in the literature of invective (cf. Ov. *Ib.*, *passim*). The choice of which part of one's body to select for the final blow is one usually offered to an adversary: cf., e.g., Ov. *Met.* 13.458–9, Tac. *Ann.* 14.8.31–3.

Structurally, this passage prepares for Oedipus' prophecy of the coming battle between his sons (271–87), and for his explanation, *ideoque leti quaero maturam uiam/ morique propero* (304–5). The exceptional savagery of these lines suggests that there is more to Oedipus' anguish than continued guilt for crimes committed long ago. That this is so is borne out by Antigone in her next speech, when, puzzled by the violence of her father's *libido moriendi*, she asks: *quod te efferarit, quod nouos suffixerit/ stimulos dolori?* (206–7).

159 pectus All the MSS have *corpus*, which Heinsius (*Aduers.*, 51) emended to *pectus*, probably correctly. The corruption could have resulted from the proximity of *corque*, and *pectus* fits better into the context: in order to tear out someone's heart, one would need to break open his chest, not crush his body. See also Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 119, who observes that *pectus* occurs in a context where indi-

vidual body parts are being considered for the death blow; there is no consideration of the body as a whole.

scelerum capax The expression is used of Cithaeron at Sen. *Oedip.* 930; cf. also Ps. Quint *Decl.* 11.11 *capax omnium malorum scelerumque pectus*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1419 *Pro lux acerba, pro capax scelerum dies*; [Sen.] *Oct.* 152–3 *iuuenis infandi ingeni,/ capaxque scelerum.*

160 sinus *Sinus*, prominently placed, increases the ugliness of the idea. Without it, one could pass fairly impassively over *uiscera*, which vaguely indicates the internal organs, but *sinus* forces upon one a detailed visual image of the recesses of the human innards.

161 incitatis ictibus *Incitatis* could refer here either to the speed and frequency of the blows (cf. Cic. *Rep.* 6.19 *hic uero tantus est totius mundi incitatissima conuersione sonitus*; Sen. *QN.* 7.7.1 *si uento inciperet, [cometes] cresceret uento eoque esset ardentior quo ille incitatior*, *Phaedr.* 1236 *haec incitatis membra turbinibus ferat*) or to their frequency (cf. Cic. *Att.* 2.24.1 *Quas Numestio litteras dedi, sic te iis euocabam, ut nihil acrius neque incitatius fieri posset.*).

guttur Guttur refers here not only to the throat, but to the whole neck, i.e. both internal and external, as commonly in accounts of death by injury to this part: see *TLL* 6.2376.74–2377.14).

162 laceraeque fixis unguibus uenae fluant Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 978–9 *lacerum caput/ largum reuulsis sanguinem uenis uomit.* For *fixis*, cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 967–8.

163 iras *Iras* suggests that Oedipus, with his *libido moriendi*, is the very antithesis of the Stoic sage, in whom *ratio* predominates (but see on 164 *rescissa*). Elsewhere Seneca declares *ira* to be *affectum . . . maxime ex omnibus taetrum ac rabidum*, because, unlike the other emotions, it is entirely violent (*Ira* 1.1), and he agrees (*Ira* 1.2) with Horace, who writes: *ira furor breuis est* (*Ep.* 1.2.62).

On the plural form, see Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 28 who notes that Seneca, like Vergil, usually uses the plural in the accusative, whereas Ovid prefers the singular.

haec uulnera Not plural for singular, but a reference to Oedipus' two empty eye-sockets.

164 rescissa *Rescissa* (= 'torn open again'; contrast *Phoen.* 226, where *rescindo* means only 'tear away'), like *nuda* (154) and *extrahe* (165), recalls the suicide of Cato, who, having wounded himself with his sword and been bound up by doctors, is said by Seneca to have *sibi*

iratus nudas in uulnus manus egit, and thus effected his death (Sen. *Ep.* 24.6–8). Seneca extolls Cato's courage and in no way condemns his *ira* – which raises the question of whether he intended these lines of *Phoen.*, so reminiscent of Cato's suicide, to evoke only horror, or whether we are meant to admire Oedipus' bravery. It would seem, in fact, that the implicit comparison between Oedipus and Cato serves to highlight the crucial difference between them. Cato, Seneca tells us, planned his suicide calmly and rationally, having assessed his situation carefully. There is no suggestion that his *ira*, mentioned only at the last, affected his judgement. Oedipus, however, is clearly driven by his *ira*, and reason plays little part in his desire for death, which is the *libido moriendi* condemned elsewhere by Seneca (see on 77–9).

tabe inriga *Tabes* here is little more than a synonym for *sanguis*, as in [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1194 [*Utinam*] . . . *hydram tabe pauissem mea*, although it may perhaps carry an additional hint of 'festering' (*OLD* *tabes* 2a). Elsewhere in Senecan drama it has the sense of 'wasting away' (so *Med.* 640–1 *praebuit saeuis sua membra flammis/ tabe consumptus gemini cruoris*; contrast [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 738, where it means 'poison'. *Inrigo* is not used of tears and blood before Seneca: cf. *Troad.* 965 *inrigat fletus genas*, *Phaedr.* 381–2 *assiduo genae/ rore irrigantur*, *Thyest.* 44 *effusus omnis irriget terras cruor* (Tarrant *ad loc.* draws attention, however, to the use of *rigo* in Verg. *Aen.* 12.308 *sparso late rigat arma cruore.*).

165 hac extrahe animam duram For the sense of *duram*, see on 113. For the idea, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 70.19 [*Catone*] . . . *qui quam ferro non emiserat animam, manu extraxit*, *Prou.* 2.11 *illam sanctissimam animam indignamque, quae ferro contaminaretur, manu educit* (also of Cato).

inexpugnabilem This is the only occurrence in Senecan drama. The primary meaning of the word concerns war and is 'invincible', 'unassailable', but it is found also, as here, used metaphorically of the human spirit: cf., e.g., Liv. 33.17.9 *Sed quam urbs ipsa opportuna oppugnantibus erat, tam inexpugnabiles hostium animi*; Ov. *Trist.* 4.10.65–6 *molle Cupidineis nec inexpugnabilis telis/ cor mihi* (*TLL* 7.1331.35–54). This, however, appears to be the only case where *inexpugnabilis* has a negative sense (i.e. because Oedipus *wants* to die). On the five-syllable word, see on *inextricabile* 133.

166–71 A solemn invocation, modelled on prayers addressed to gods wherever they may be or whatever cult centre they may currently be occupying (see NH on Hor. *Od.* 1.30.1). In prayers also, as here, much parenthetic material may intervene between the initial

vocative and the actual request – twenty-five lines in the case of Lucr. 1.1–28. Cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 663–4 *Te te, soror, quacumque siderei poli/ in parte fulges, inuoco ad causam parem.*

166 Et tu, parens, ubicumque poenarum arbiter According to Strzelecki, 78, there are only twenty-seven third-foot anapaests in all the genuine plays of Seneca. Apart from this instance, third-foot anapaests occur in *Phoen.* also at 312, 604, 625 (see Strzelecki, *ibid.*, for instances in the other plays).

167–9 non ego hoc tantum scelus/ ulla expiari credidi poena satis/ umquam The *scelus* referred to here is Oedipus' parricide. The hyperbaton allows emphasis to fall on the key words, *ulla*, *satis*, and especially *umquam.* The double indefinite, *ulla . . . umquam*, is also emphatic (cf. 152 *nemo non*). The sentiment contrasts with Oedipus' satisfaction with his self-blinding at Sen. *Oedip.* 998–9 *Bene habet, peractum est: iusta persolui patri./ iuuant tenebrae.*

169 ista morte On the superiority of the MS reading, *morte,* to Gronovius' *nocte,* which is essentially a gloss on *morte,* see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 119–20.

170–1 nec me redemi parte: membratim tibi/ perire uolui By the metaphor from debt-repayment (*redemi*), Seneca, with grim wit, represents Oedipus' self-blinding (*parte* refers to his eyes) as being the payment of the first instalment of his limb-by-limb suicide. For *membratim* used of a gradual death, cf. Lucr. 3.526–7 *hominem . . . cernimus/ . . . membratim uitalem deperdere sensum*; Sen. *Ep.* 101.14 *Inuenitur aliquis, qui uelit inter supplicia tabescere et perire membratim. . . .*

The word order of *E, perire uolui* (*A* has *uolui perire*), has in its favour the prominence it gives to *perire. E* is generally more reliable than *A* on word order: excluding this instance, of the eight cases where *E* and *A* differ on word order in *Phoen.* (viz. 18, 171, 230 (allowing for the corruption of *es* to *est* in *E*), 279, 331, 570, 573, 636), *A* is correct only once.

172 nunc soluo poenas, tunc tibi inferias dedi *Nunc* and *tunc*, with *tunc* coming immediately after the caesura, stress the opposition of the two clauses (cf. also 174–8 *timida tunc/ . . . /haeret etiamnunc . . .*). The gruesome metaphor contained in *tunc tibi inferias dedi*, where Oedipus' action of gouging out his eyes is compared to the pious custom of making innocuous offerings (e.g. of wine, milk, flowers) to

the dead, is in keeping with the macabre wit of the passage as a whole. Hirschberg *ad loc.* compares Ov. *Ib.* 267–8 *Quique oculis caruit, per quos male uiderat aurum,/ inferias nato quos dedit orba parens.* Cf. 92–3, where Oedipus describes his self-blinding as expiation for his crime against his *mother.*

173–4 ades . . . / magisque merge The exaggerated image of a Laius, eager for vengeance, forcing Oedipus' reluctant hand back into his empty eye-sockets, verges on bathos; cf. 62 and see note *ad loc.*

The more usual comparative with *mergo* would be *altius* (so Sen. *QN.* 4.13.6, *Ep.* 53.7; Plin. *HN.* 9.109), which is metrically impossible here.

174 tunc The MSS have *tum*, but Leo's emendation is probably correct in view of *tunc* in 172 and *nunc* in 176, with which *tunc* would contrast more effectively than *tum.*

174–5 timida tunc paruo caput/ libauit haustu Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 978–9 *rigat ora foedus imber et lacerum caput/ largum reuulsis sanguinem uenis uomit.*

For *libo* used in a context of injuring or doing violence, cf. only Stat. *Theb.* 8.527–8 *paulumque umeri libare sinistri/ praebuit*; *Ilias Latina* 608 *ensis . . . exiguo ceruicem uulnere libat.* The metaphor is an extension of the one contained in *tunc tibi inferias dedi* (172): the blood from Oedipus' eyes is compared to funerary drink-offerings. *Libo* can, and may here, also suggest the idea of beginning an action, or of doing something lightly or half-heartedly: cf. Plin. *HN.* 7.123 *Varium artium scientia innumerabiles enituere, quos tamen attingi par sit florem hominum libantibus*; Ov. *Met.* 10.653 *summam celeri pede libat harenam.*

175–6 uixque cupientes sequi/ eduxit oculos Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 962–4 *at contra truces/ oculi steterunt et suam intenti manum/ ultro insecuntur, uulneri occurrunt suo.*

176–8 Oedipus' sudden swing from determination to timidity and self-doubt is very Senecan: cf. *Med.* 893–5, *Oedip.* 930–52, *Thyest.* 281–6; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 305–10.

176–7 haeret . . . animus Tarrant on Sen. *Thyest.* 419 observes that the combination *animus haeret*, in addition to being more elevated than *haereo*, conveys the detachment from self that some of Seneca's characters display (cf. Oedipus' reference to himself in the third person in 89 and see note *ad loc.*). Tietze, 31–3, observes that such

hesitation is regarded by Seneca in his prose works as the sign of moral imperfection and instability: the virtuous are decisive and consistent in their behaviour.

178 uultus = *oculos*, as at Sen. *Troad.* 966, *Oedip.* 326, *Thyest.* 950.

Oedipu Schmidt's conjecture, *Oedipus*, was generally accepted by editors prior to Giardina, but in favour of *Oedipu* (δ reads *edippu*) E. Courtney (rev. of Viansino *CR* 84 (1970), 198–200 at 199) has argued convincingly that Seneca would have known the Greek form Οἰδίπου and that there is an exact parallel in Latin in *Melampu* (Stat. *Theb.* 3.546, 573); see also Zwierlein (1969), 258.

This single instance of self-address in *Phoen.* serves two purposes: firstly, it marks the transition between Oedipus' address to Laius and his address to himself; secondly, it indicates not only Oedipus' self-detachment (see on 176–8) but also his self-aggression – the use of the name here, as in a quarrel between two individuals, becomes an instrument of attack. The device of self-address by name goes back to Euripides (cf. *Med.* 401–3, *Hec.* 736–8, and see Williams, *Trad. and Orig.*, 461–2).

179–80 minus eruisti lumina audacter tua,/ quam praestitisti Trans. 'you dug out your eyeballs less boldly than you undertook to do'. For this sense of *praesto*, cf. Sen. *Contr.* 2.5.8 *uxor mortem . . . pro uiro praestitisset.* The conceit is puzzling: Seneca must mean that when Oedipus drove his fingers into his eye-sockets, he did not do as thorough a job as he had pledged to do in that he did not kill himself, but, of course, suicide was not Oedipus' aim at that stage (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 935–70).

For *eruo* used with reference to the eyes, cf. Ov. *Med.* 12.268–9 *figitur hinc duplici Gryneus in lumina ramo/ eruitur oculos* and Sen. *Contr.* 1.4.10 *fili, aut oculos erue aut manus commoda* (see further *TLL* 5.845.38–49).

181 perage . . . coepi On the change from second to first person singular, see Zwierlein (1966), 683. Axelson, *Korruptelenkult*, 9 n.3, commenting on [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1983ff., cites as parallel cases Sen. *Thyest.* 242–3 *Tantalum et Pelopem aspice;/ ad haec manus exempla poscuntur meae* and *Oedip.* 35–6 *sperare poteras sceleribus tantis dari/ regnum salubre? fecimus caelum nocens.*

qua coepi mori Cf. Luc. 3.690 *qua coepere mori.* Seneca here returns to his image of the 'living death' of Oedipus (see on 98).

182–215 Antigone's speech is a miniature *suasoria*, which divides

into three sections: 1) introduction and argument that a man of true *uirtus* (like Oedipus) should be indifferent to death (182–99); 2) argument that there is no need for Oedipus to kill himself since he is blameless (200–5); argument that Oedipus has isolated himself so completely that he has already escaped from the world and there is therefore no need for him to commit suicide (205–15). The style of the last section is particularly declamatory, with its series of rhetorical questions and answers. It is striking that in this speech of only thirty-four lines, Antigone no fewer than four times uses a family term with which to address Oedipus: *parens* (182), *pater* (190), *genitor* (204, 215). Were Antigone and Oedipus members of a conventional family, there would be nothing remarkable in this: in a situation where one person is trying to obtain something from another, the former tends to use to name of the latter frequently, as a means of stressing the relationship, whether real or imaginary, between them. But in this drama about *unnatural* family relationships, Antigone's repeated use of family terms serves as a reminder of the genetic chaos for which Oedipus is responsible. The result is that, while on one level Antigone is trying to persuade Oedipus that he is not guilty, on another level her words emphasise the reality of the incestuous tangle which he has caused. One may note also *natae* (183), which reinforces the effect of *parens* (182) (cf. 1–3 *parentis . . . patris . . . nata . . . patrem*). This is the only time that Antigone refers to herself as Oedipus' daughter.

On the significant use of family names in *Phoen.*, see on *nata* 2.

182 Pauca, o parens magnanime, miserandae precor By hyperbaton Seneca achieves this strikingly alliterative line, which creates a powerful opening for Antigone's speech. Since alliteration occurs more frequently in Latin with the letter *p* than with any other letter (Bonner, *Rom. Decl.*, 66), this suggests that it was regarded as being particularly effective. The vocative, as frequently, by interrupting the flow of the sentence, stresses the word which precedes it (cf. 204, 215, 288, 403).

Magnanimus (= μεγάθυμος in Homer, Hesiod, and Apollonius) is a conventional epithet of kings, heroes, and sometimes whole nations (*OLD magnanimus* a). It occurs in Senecan drama also at *Herc. Fur.* 310 (of Theseus), *Oedip.* 294 (of Oedipus), *Phaedr.* 869 (of Theseus). Although its use here may seem to be ironical, since Oedipus' recent behaviour would hardly appear to justify the heroic epithet, it is probably intended by Antigone to be hortatory: she is reminding him that he is a hero and should act accordingly.

184 ueteris ad speciem domus *Veteris* here has the sense of 'past' (*OLD uetus* 5) rather than of 'ancient', as commonly: it is not the antiquity of the Theban royal residence that is of importance in this context, but the fact that it was formerly the home of Oedipus.

Speciem here = 'splendour'; for this use of *species*, more common in prose than in poetry, see *OLD species* 4a.

185 habitumque regni flore pollentem inclito Here, as at 54 and 209, Antigone mentions the prosperity and power of the kingdom of Thebes. In all three cases, Seneca uses the conventional idea of the wealth and strength of a king's realm for a rhetorical purpose: in the first instance (54), it indicates the extent of Antigone's filial devotion; in 209, as here, it serves as a reminder of the extent to which the fortunes of Oedipus have changed. Here, in addition, it is intended to encourage Oedipus to remember his former position and to act accordingly (see on 182 *magnanime*).

For the combination *flore . . . inclito*, cf. Sen. *Med.* 226 with Costa *ad loc.*

186 aut *Aut* instead of *neque* is found in both poetry and prose, when *aut* functions as a connective between individual words rather than between clauses (*OLD aut* 5a; KS 2.103), but *aut* instead of *neque*, when *aut* introduces a clause, occurs only occasionally and only in poetry: cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 4.337–9 *neque ego hanc abscondere furto/ speraui (ne finge) fugam, nec coniugis umquam/ praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera ueni*; Luc. 1.286–7 *nunc neque te longi remeantem pompa triumphi/ excipit aut sacras poscunt Capitolia laurus.* For *non . . . aut* (= *neque*), as here, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 11.736–7 *at non in Venerem segnes nocturnaque bella/ aut ubi curua choros indixit tibia Bacchi.*

iras See on 163.

ipsa mora *Ipsa* here = 'even'; thus fairly commonly in negative sentences (see *TLL* 7.349.36–60; LHS 1.448). *Ipse* is used by Seneca with this sense also at *Troad.* 874–5 *tale coniugium tibi/ non ipsa sospes Troia, non Priamus daret*, *Phaedr.* 717–18 *non ipse toto magnus Oceano pater/ tantum expiarit sceleris*; cf. [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1366–7, 1385.

On the lapse of time between the anagnorisis and Oedipus' self-exile, see Intro., 18.

186–7 [non] peto ut iras, temporum haut ipsa mora/ fractas . . . feras This is a variation on the standard plea for restraint made to the protagonist by the Nurse, relative, or confidant: cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1274–7 (Theseus); *Med.* 157–8, 381, 425–6 (Nurse); *Phaedr.* 255–6

(Nurse); *Agam.* 203–4, 224–5 (Nurse); [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 927–8 (Nurse). Antigone says that she will *not* ask Oedipus to restrain his passion, and then proceeds in a roundabout way to do just that.

Antigone's words, *iras, temporum haut mora fractas,* do not imply that Oedipus' anguish and mad longing for death have been constantly raging since he learnt of his crimes – 205–15 make it clear that this is not the case – but that his guilt and self-loathing, having burst forth again, are as strong now as they were then, despite the passage of time.

For the expression *iras . . . fractas,* cf. Sen. *Clem.* 1.19.4 *Utinam quidem eadem homini lex esset et ira cum telo suo frangeretur,* 2.5.5 *sed omnem fortunae iram reuerberabit et ante se frangit*; also Stat. *Theb.* 8.535; Aur. Vict. *Orig.* 16.3.

187 remisso pectore et placido Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 219 *remisso lumine ac placido.* For *pectore placido,* cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.521 *maximus Ilioneus placido sic pectore coepit.*

188 at The MSS have *et,* which Richter emended to *at,* correctly, since a connective with adversative force is clearly demanded by the context: Antigone says 'I do not ask you to resume your kingly position nor to moderate your anger, *but* merely not to show weakness'.

decebat The imperfect, *decebat,* probably illustrates the Latin preference for the indicative, rather than the subjunctive, with a modal verb, i.e. *decebat* means 'it *would be* fitting'. The usage originates with Lucretius: cf. 1.881–3 *conueniebat enim fruges quoque saepe./.. mittere signum/ sanguinis,* 1.885–7 *consimili ratione herbas quoque saepe decebat/ et laticis dulcis guttas similique sapore/ mittere* (see Mayer, 64, who notes in addition Ov. *Met.* 3.540–2 *uosne./..quos arma tenere,/ non thyrsos, galea tegi, non fronde decebat?*); Sen. *Clem.* 2.1.4 *Nunc profecto consentire decebat ad aequum bonumque*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1134–5 *nunc, pater, caecum chaos/ reddi decebat.*

188–201 Antigone takes up where she left off at 77–9: she refers again to Oedipus' *robur* and to his being *uictum malis,* but this time she proceeds to explain why Oedipus should not turn to death as an escape from his troubles (193–6). In so doing, she flatteringly assimilates Oedipus to the Stoic sage, who triumphs over adversity until his indifference to the vicissitudes of Fortune makes him invulnerable to them (Sen. *Prou.* 4.12–13). There is no need for such a man to desire death, according to Antigone (but not to the Stoics; see on 77–9), since the conditions of his life do not trouble him. *Malis* (191), implying Oedipus' parricide and incest, and *bona* (193), probably a

reference to Oedipus' kingly status with all its attendant advantages, are terms which are common in Stoic language, but which are here used in an un-Stoic sense. Thus Antigone' general argument that suicide shows weakness might also be seen as flawed (see on 197–8).

190–1 non est, ut putas, uirtus, pater/ timere uitam Seneca makes Antigone use Oedipus' technique of dissuasion against him: cf. 97–8, where Oedipus says to Antigone, *peccas honesta mente, pietatem uocas/ patrem insepultum trahere.* This is illustrative of the linguistic and stylistic links between speeches, which may, on the surface, appear to be virtually unconnected (cf. on 93). The word order here is significant. The family term, *pater*, is prominent at the end of the line (see on 182–215). The apostrophe, *ut putas*, causes stress to fall on *uirtus*, that key-word in Stoic philosophy. *Timere*, too, is given weight by its position as the first word in the line: *timor*, being irrational, is opposed to the Stoic ideal of *uirtus* based on *ratio*, and thus a man who committed suicide because he feared life would not be acting in accordance with Stoic precepts – although his decision might be the correct one, it would be a case of 'doing the right deed for the wrong reason'. *Timor/ odium uitae* and *libido moriendi* are two sides of the same coin, and both are condemned elsewhere by Seneca (cf. *Ep.* 4.4, 24.25–6, 30.15; *Tranq.* 2.14–15).

192 se uertere ac retro dare Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 86, where Jocasta says to Oedipus, *haud est uirile terga Fortunae dare*; also *Herc. Fur.* 1275–7 *nunc tuum nulli imparem/ animum malo resume, nunc magna tibi/ uirtute agendum est.*

193 proculcauit For the figurative use of *proculco*, cf. Tac. *Hist.* 1.40 *proculcato senatu*; Suet. *Vesp.* 5.3 *proculcatam desertamque rem publicam ciuili aliqua perturbatam.*

194 proiecit atque abscidit Hysteron-proteron: the more important word, *proiecit*, which should logically follow *abscidit*, is brought forward to a prominent position at the beginning of the line; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.353 *moriamur et in media arma ruamus*; Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.293–4 *aegrum . . . mater delira necabit/ in gelida fixum ripa febremque reducet.*

casus Antigone's use of *casus* reflects her attitude, expressed openly in 203–15, that Oedipus is innocent, since *casus* in Roman law and rhetoric was opposed to *dolus* and was not punishable: cf. Cic. *Planc.* 35 *nullum crimen est in casu*, *Her.* 2.24 *utrum casu nescierit an culpa*; Liv. 25.3.10 *ea ipsa . . . fraude ipsorum facta erant non casu.*

194–5 et casus suos/ onerauit ipse Oedipus himself (the emphatic force of *ipse* is enhanced by its position) has added to his troubles by his self-mutilation. *Onero* here does not simply mean 'heap up', as it usually does; rather it has the sense of 'aggravate': cf., e.g., Liv. 6.11.9 *bellum . . . graue per se, oneratum Latinorum . . . defectione*; Tac. *Ann.* 1.69 *accendebat haec* [viz. Tiberius' suspicions] *onerabatque Seianus* (*OLD onero* 8).

195 cui do nullo est opus The gods are here seen as providers of material benefits, each responsible for a different province. Miller's translation, 'who has no need of God', obscures this.

For the notion that comfort can be gained from reaching a point of suffering where one no longer has anything to ask of the gods, cf. Ov. *Met.* 14.486–90, Sen. *Troad.* 419–25.

196 cupiat Lipsius' conjecture, *fugiat*, is attractive, because the resultant antithesis with *petat* gives improved sense. It is a commonplace and needs no argument that to flee death is cowardice; for her paradoxical claim that it is equally a mark of cowardice to seek death, Antigone produces the specious argument that to desire death is to fail to treat it with the indifference which courage requires (197–8). 196 would thus be a paratactic way of expressing the thought 'would no more have a motive for seeking death than for shunning it' (for such parataxis, cf. Hor. *Od.* 1.6.4 with NH *ad loc.*). The *-g-* of *fugiat* could easily have become *-p-*, leading to the 'correction' of *f-* to *c-*. However, *cupiat*, on which there is MS consensus, gives satisfactory sense, since *cupiat . . . petat* is not repetitive: *cupiat* suggests a passive desire (='desire'), while *petat* implies action (= 'actively seek'). I therefore retain *cupiat*, albeit with some reservation.

197 contempsit mori *Mori* here = *mortem.* Seneca is fond of using the infinitive as a substantive, particularly in his prose works: see Summers, lxiv–lxv, for examples in the epistles; in the dramas, cf. *Oedip.* 992–3 *multis ipsum/ metuisse nocet.* In general, see KS 1.666, where the example most similar to this one is Caes. *BC.* 1.29.1 *maxime probabat coactis nauibus mare transire.*

197–8 nemo contempsit mori/ qui concupiuit The repetition of the prefix *con-* gives force to the antithesis in the *sententia.* Indifference to death is a constantly recurring theme in Seneca's prose writings: cf., e.g., *Prou.* 6.6; *Ep.* 23.4, 24.6–14, 36. 10–12, 75.14, 98.16; *QN.* 2.59.3–4; also *Herc. Fur.* 612). For the most part, Seneca was

concerned to advise and instruct against fear of death (see Griffin, 384–8), but in *Ep.* 24.24–5 he deals with the problem of the *libido moriendi*, which, like fear of death, is condemned as being contrary to *ratio* (see on 77–9).

198–9 cuius haut ultra mala/ exire possunt, in loco tuto est situs This is a neat *sententia*, though hardly a convincing argument against suicide, since clearly Oedipus' situation *could* become worse. The *sententia* functions more effectively on the level of rhetoric than on that of sense: it rounds off the first section of Antigone's speech and introduces the second (200–15). (On the *sententia* as a unit of division in Senecan drama, see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 160). For other examples of this type of terminal *sententia* in *Phoen.*, cf. 80 *tantis in malis uinci mori est*, which completes Antigone's first speech; 151–3, a series of three *sententiae* on the ubiquity of death which conclude Oedipus' declaration of his determination to die by whatever means, after which his attention turns to the destructive power of his hands; 386, which ends Jocasta's first speech; 598, which concludes Polyneices' speech; 630–3, which completes Jocasta's observations on the uncertainty of the fortunes of war, after which she moves to point out the guilt which Polyneices would incur.

200 uelle fac For the expression, *uelle fac*, which does not occur elsewhere in Seneca's writings, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.540 *quis me autem, fac uelle, sinet . . . ?*; Stat. *Theb.* 2.449–51 *fac uelle: nec ipsi,/ si modo natus amor meritique est gratia, patres/ reddere regna sinent*; compare Sen. *Ep.* 107.11 (perhaps quoting Cleanthes) *fac nolle.*

202 ut esse te putes dignum nece Cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 256–7, where the Nurse says to Phaedra, *dignam ob hoc uita reor/ quod esse temet autumas dignam nece.*

203–15 Antigone's insistence on Oedipus' innocence contrasts sharply with Oedipus' strong sense of guilt, expressed throughout this first fragment. One can compare [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 884–902, where the Nurse tries to dissuade Deineira from suicide by insisting that her 'crime' was no more than an *error*, and Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1237–8, where Amphitryon uses the same argument against Hercules. In each, a kinsman insists that the offender's action was an involuntary one caused by Fate/Fortune and therefore one for which the offender need feel no guilt, and the offender persists in seeing his/her deed as a *scelus*. To the former, who operate legalistically and rationally, a

scelus is a voluntary act of wrongdoing, whereas for the offenders, whose perspective is religious and moralistic, it has nothing to do with the voluntariness or involuntariness of their actions – their actions may have been predestined, but they nevertheless feel polluted by them, hence they see them as *scelera*. (See Zwierlein's full discussion in *Senecas Hercules im Lichte*, 35–42.)

R. Pack, 'On Guilt and Error in Senecan Tragedy' *TAPhA* 71 (1940), 360–71 at 367–8, notes that the sense which the three kinsmen give to *error* and *scelus* is part of a rhetorical formula; he cites as examples of parallel usage: Cic. *Marcell.* 13 *Omnes enim qui ad illa arma fato sumus nescio quo rei publicae misero funestoque compulsi, etsi aliqua culpa tenemur erroris humani, ab scelere certe liberati sumus*; Ov. *Trist.* 3.6.25–6 *idque ita, si nullum scelus est in pectore nostro,/ principiumque mei criminis error habet*; also Cic. *Lig.* 17; Ov. *Trist.* 3.11.33–4, 4.10.89–90, *Met.* 3.141–2; Sen. *Contr.* 4.3. See also on 451–4.

203 hoc *Hoc* here = 'this . . . of yours': cf. 61 with note *ad loc.*

205 dis inuitis The confusion between *inuitus* and *inuisus* occurs also at *Med.* 952 and 991, and there, as here, *inuitus* is clearly the correct reading, the expression *dis inuitis* being almost proverbial (see *TLL* 7.235.3–8). The meaning of *dis inuitis* is that the gods have desired Oedipus' guilt and that Apollo's prediction expressed his will and not merely his foreknowledge.

quid est The strong sense-pause after the fifth foot is uncommon in Senecan drama; in *Phoen.*, apart from this instance, it occurs only at 234.

205–15 The string of rhetorical questions (cf., e.g., Sen. *Troad.* 814–60, *Thyest.* 802–14; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1234–65), broken by a few answers, rises to a climax with the final question, *quem, genitor, fugis?* (215). The repetition of *quid* and *quod* in quick succession (205–8) gives a staccato urgency to Antigone's interrogation. The momentum slows with *ut careas die* (208) and the beginning of the question-answer series (208–15): Antigone is no longer simply throwing out questions at random; she has collected herself to consider more closely the possible reason for Oedipus' behaviour, and her questions become more searching, culminating in her final cry. The introduction of answers into the series of questions gives Seneca the opportunity for some emphatic repetition, so *careas . . . cares* (208–9), *patriamque . . . patria* (210). Antigone's final question as to *whom* Oedipus is fleeing, gains impact by contrast with her preceding inquiries as to *what* Oedipus is fleeing (214).

206 efferarit *Effero* occurs most frequently in post-Augustan prose and occasionally in poetry (see Billerbeck, 76–7 para. 164). Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 397 *Agedum efferatas rabida uoces amoue*; *Phaedr.* 922–3 *siluarum incola/ ille efferatus castus intactus rudis.*

nouos This indicates that Oedipus has not been in a state of frenzy ever since he learnt the truth about his crimes, but that something has recently revived his anguish. It prepares for the eruption of the theme of the fraternal conflict in 273–306.

206–7 suffixerit/ stimulos dolori Seneca here reverses the usual form of the metaphor: contrast Liv. 1.40.4 *sed et iniuriae dolor in Tarquinium ipsum . . . stimulabat*; Sen. *Ep.* 70.25 *ubi . . . stimulos adegit dolor*; Sil. 6.256–7 *nec frustra rapidi, stimulante dolore, fuisset/ impetus.*

208–15 This is a witty inversion of the common rhetorical figure in which a speaker asks 'whither can I fly?' and then lists, in the question form, a series of possible destinations, each of which is rejected (cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1321–31; *Med.* 451–8; and A.S. Hollis (*Ovid: Metamorphoses Book VIII* (Oxford, 1970)) on Ov. *Met.* 8.133. Here, instead of listing destinations for flight and showing each to be impossible, Antigone lists different things *from* which Oedipus wishes to flee, and shows that in each case his wish has already been granted.

208–9 ut careas die?/ cares; *Careo die* is an adaptation by Seneca, *metri gratia*, of the conventional poetic periphrasis for death, *careo luce* (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.12; Verg. *Georg.* 4.472; Ov. *Met.* 14.725; Sen. *Med.* 549, *Troad.* 603). There is some play on the literal sense of the expression and its figurative meaning: in her question, Antigone clearly uses *careo die* figuratively, whereas in her response she refers quite literally to the fact that Oedipus is 'without light' because of his blindness. Implicit in this word-play is the notion of Oedipus' existence as a 'living death' (see on 96).

209 altis nobilem muris domum See on 185.

210 patria tibi uiuo perit *Perit* is a contracted perfect, *tibi uiuo* a dative of reference with overtones of the dative of separation: cf., e.g., Liv. 39.18.1 *multis actiones et res peribant*; Quint. *Inst.* 1.10.44 *quidquid formae quadrati detraxeris, amplitudini quoque peribit* (*OLD pereo* 1b). *Viuo perit* is the most striking example in *Phoen.* of antithesis resulting from the immediate juxtaposition of single words of opposite meaning; other examples occur at 65 *duobus omnis*, 289 *pater natos*, 411 *iuuenes anus* (see Canter, 152–5, for examples in the other plays).

211 natos fugis matremque Again, Ismene's existence seems to be ignored, unless one is to assume that *natos* includes Ismene. *Matrem* is ambiguous: it most obviously refers to Jocasta as the mother of Oedipus (i.e. 'your sons and your mother'), but it could also apply to Jocasta as the mother of Eteocles and Polyneices (i.e. 'your sons and their mother'). The ambiguity is increased by the word order: because *fugio* precedes rather than follows *matremque*, *natos fugis* stands as a unit, with *matrem* added on as a separate unit. The ambiguity is in keeping with the nature of this speech, in which Antigone's intention and the effect of her words are quite different (see on 182–215).

For the idea, here ironically inverted, that separation from one's wife and children is death's cruellest blow, cf. Lucr. 3.894–9.

213 auferre cuiquam mors tibi hoc uita abstulit The position of *tibi*, at the beginning of its clause is emphatic: Oedipus' situation is extraordinary in that, in his case, life has taken from him what it is usually left to death to take.

This verse is unique among Senecan trimeters because of the syntactical break after a monosyllable (*mors*) following the caesura in the third foot (see Drexler, *röm. Metr.*, 136).

214 turba fortunae prior Hypallage for *turba fortunae prioris*, although *prior* should perhaps be understood with *turba* as well. Cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 255 *Nil quod doloris capiat assueti modum*, where, similarly, *assuetus* may be connected with two nouns.

215 a te iussa It is a commonplace that friends may desert one in times of misfortune (Otto, *amicus* 7, p. 22), which may explain the reading of *A*, *ante*, but the point here is that Oedipus' state of isolation is of his own making: his followers did not leave him of their own accord, but because Oedipus *ordered* them to do so.

216 omnium = 'of all my': so consuming is Oedipus' sense of pollution that his parricide and incest are multiplied in his mind; cf. 158 *totus nocens sum.*

216–87 This speech falls into three sections: 216–40, in which Oedipus, seized by an overwhelming sense of pollution (216–25), desires first the destruction of his sense of hearing so that he may be completely isolated (226–33), and then, as though rejecting this as a half-measure, returns to his longing for death since he has nothing left to live for (234–40). At this point, Antigone should be thought of as trying to restrain Oedipus, whereupon he waves her away (241–2)

before embarking on the second part of his speech (243–73), in which he gives his own twisted version (see on 243–62) of his history, concluding, with reference to his incestuous marriage and to the children born of that union: *nullum crimen hoc maius potest/ natura ferre* (272–3). This prompts the thought: *si quod etiamnum est tamen,/ qui facere possent dedimus* (273–4), which ushers in the third and most detailed mention so far (see on 273–87) of the 'crescendo of reference' to the conflict of the brothers.

216 me Oedipus' preoccupation with his guilt and, consequently, with his destiny and his identity is suggested by his insistent use in this act of *ego*, *meus/noster*, and verbs in the first person. These frequently occur in emphatic positions (so *me* 216; also *meus* 13, *mei* 139, *meis* 297), or are repeated (so, e.g., *fugio* 216, 217, 218, and *ego* 219, 220, 221, 222, 224. D.& E. Henry, *Mask*, 188n.17, point out, further, that the first-person possessive is often superfluous for the sense, but is used with nouns 'that remind the listener of the unnatural aspects of Oedipus' story'; they cite, among other instances, *natus meus* (109), *in thalamos meos* (270), *nefas/ de more nostro . . . meos. . . . toros* (356–7).

216–8 These lines are skillfully constructed. The first chiastic pair, *me fugio, fugio . . . pectus*, not only allows the immediate repetition of *fugio* (picking up Antigone's *fugio* in 215), but places *me* and *pectus* prominently at the beginning of 216 and 217 respectively. In the second chiastic pair, *conscium . . . pectus, manumque hanc, manum* is highlighted: Oedipus wishes to flee even his own body, which has proved inadequate as an intrument of punishment against itself. In the triad which follows, et *hoc caelum et deos et dira . . . scelera*, the sledge-hammer repetition of *et* and the abandonment of stylistic elegance suggest a rising tide of hysteria which is enhanced, perhaps, by the fact that 218 harks back to 216. The point about the things which Oedipus wants to escape, as opposed to those listed by Antigone from which he has succeeded in fleeing (209–15), is that they are inescapable – hence his frustration and desperate longing for death.

217–20 hanc (217) . . . hoc (217) . . . hoc (219) . . . has (220) See on 118–22. Here the deictics are genuine, as possibly in 67–73, whereas in 118–22 they clearly are not.

217 et hoc caelum et deos *Hoc* suggests that *caelum* refers specifically to the light and air of the upper world, the implication being that Oedipus would rather be in Hades. For instances where

caelum is explicitly contrasted with the atmosphere of the underworld, cf. Verg. *Georg.* 3.417; Stat. *Theb.* 8.733–4, *Silu.* 5.3.287. Oedipus' sense of pollution extends beyond himself to include *hoc caelum et deos* (in terms of sense, *hoc* applies to *deos* as well as to *caelum*): the gods are those of the upper world); cf. 7–8 *et hoc nefandi capitis aspectu leuet/ caelum atque terras.* This reflects the Stoic concept of the universe as a unified, animate entity, in which the actions of human beings can have repercussions in the cosmos at large: cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 36 *fecimus caelum nocens.* On the Stoic understanding of the unity of the cosmos, see Herington, 433–5; Pratt, *Seneca's Drama,* 46–57; Regenbogen, 'Schmerz und Tod', 437–8; F.H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (London, 1975), 75–8; L. Edelstein, *The Meaning of Stoicism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), chap. 2.

218 et dira fugio scelera quae feci innocens The reading of *E, innocens,* is obviously correct, since *nocens* of *A* makes no sense: even a guilt-ridden Oedipus could not have considered that he was *legally* guilty of crimes which he had committed in ignorance (cf. S. *OC.* 988–99). The point of the verse seems to be the very Senecan paradox created between *scelera,* which implies culpability of some sort, and *innocens.* Oedipus here rejects Antigone's insistence on his complete innocence (203–5): he recognises his legal innocence – hence *quae feci innocens* – but nevertheless regards his actions as *scelera* by which he has been polluted (cf. 158 *totus nocens sum*). In support of *innocens,* Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.,* 122) observes that in 216–18 Oedipus is referring back to Antigone's exhortations in 203–5: thus *fugio conscium scelerum omnium/ pectus* (216–17) refutes Antigone's insistence *nec ulla pectus hoc culpa attigit* (203), and *scelera quae feci innocens* is a response to 204–5, *et hoc magis te, genitor, insontem uoca,/ quod innocens es dis quoque inuitis.*

Wilamowitz deleted this verse, but most modern editors have retained it. The strongest argument in favour of deletion would seem to be that the verse repeats what Oedipus has already said in 216–17: *fugio conscium scelerum omnium/ pectus,* but repetition is so much a feature of Senecan drama that this is hardly compelling. One might add, perhaps, that the verse lacks spontaneity, that it is too obviously a careful refutation of Antigone's argument, and that 219 would follow smoothly from 217, were 218 eliminated. None of these arguments, however, is conclusive, especially as it is hard to see how and why the interpolation would have occurred.

dira . . . scelera On the implications of this phrase, see

Hirschberg *ad loc.* who observes that *scelera* here refers generally to Oedipus' crimes and not specifically to his offspring; contrast Cinna frg. 13 (Traglia) *at scelus incesto Zmyrna crescebat in aluo.*

219 solum . . . quo *Quo* here = 'to which' (see *OLD quo*[1] 3a), with *solum* = 'surface' (cf. Ov. *Fast.* 1.154 *prodit et in summum seminis herba solum*; see also *OLD solum* 6a). The image is of corn growing from below the ground to its surface.

Ceres The gifts of a god/goddess – in this case, wheat, fruit, etc. – were commonly designated by the name of the deity who was responsible for them. For *Ceres* used in this way, cf., e.g., Verg. *Georg.* 1.297; Sen. *Oedip.* 49 (see further *TLL Onomasticon* 2.342.62–343.6). The saying *sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus* was proverbial (see Otto, *Venus*).

219–20 Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1142 *quas trahimus auras? quod solum fesso subest?*

frugifera . . . pestifero The contrast between the healthy fruitfulness of the earth and Oedipus' tainted state is emphasised by the repetition of *-fera*, *-fero*. As well as indicating Oedipus' sense of pollution, *pestifero* may contain an allusion to the plague which came upon Thebes as a result of Oedipus' parricide and destroyed its fruitfulness (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 630–3).

219–25 The repetition of *ego* stresses Oedipus' sense of contamination: 'Do I [who am so polluted] . . . ; see on 216. Oedipus has broken the sacred taboos of society by committing the two most heinous crimes, parricide and incest (see 265–6, where he describes his incest as *facinus ignotum efferum/ inusitatum . . . quod populi horreant* and Sen. *Oedip.* 639, where Laius says of it: *vix mos est feris*). Despite his technical innocence, he is morally polluted in the deepest sense, with the result that he feels unworthy not only to live among other people, but even to breathe the same air, tread the same soil etc. as they do (for the cosmic effect of sinfulness, see Sen. *Oedip.* 36 *fecimus caelum nocens* and note on 217). Cf. Ov. *Ib.* 107–16, where Ovid prays that nature may withhold from his enemy the gifts which Oedipus here wishes to be denied to himself.

221–2 ullo fruor/ almae parentis munere An example of one of the types of five-word grouping favoured by Seneca – two noun-adjective pairs, one enclosing the other, with a verb included. Canter, 175, estimates its average occurrence as once in every sixty–four verses.

Parens here probably refers not to Ceres, specifically the crop-producer, but to Terra, the goddess responsible for everything which the earth produces. Terra is more commonly designated as *mater* (cf., e.g., Liv. 8.6.10; Tac. *Ger.* 40.2), but cf. Juv. 8.257 *Terraeque parenti*; Apul. *Met.* 6.10 *terrae omniparentis*. *Alma* is a conventional epithet of female deities (see *TLL* 1.1703. 38–73).

222–4 ego castam manum/ . . . / attrecto *Castus*, apart from denoting sexual chastity, can mean 'pure', 'unsullied' in a ritual sense, and *attrecto* means 'touch', particularly in a religious sense. The implication is that the polluted Oedipus is ritually unclean and therefore unworthy to touch the pure hand of his daughter (on incest and parricide as religious offences, see Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change*, 41–3). *Attrecto* can, however, also have the sense of 'assault sexually': so Cic. *Cael.* 20 *fore qui dicerent uxores suas . . . attrectatas*; Suet. *Nero* 26.2 *a quodam . . . cuius uxorem attrectauerat*). Seneca may here be encouraging an appreciation of its sexual connotation, providing as pointers *castam* and *incestificus*. The possibility of Oedipus' having sexual designs on Antigone, perhaps a Senecan innovation, has already been introduced at 48–50 (see also Intro., 28).

223 nefandus incestificus exsecrabilis An exceptionally striking line: it is the only three-word iambic verse in Senecan drama, it consists solely of adjectives in asyndeton (cf. *Phaedr.* 939 *longinqua clausa abstrusa diuersa inuia*; *Herc. Fur.* 32 *terribile dirum pestilens atrox ferum* with Fitch *ad loc.* for parallels outside Seneca's plays), and *incestificus* (= *incestus*; see Billerbeck, 39 para. 72) is a ἅπαξ λεγόμενον. The piling up of adjectives is peculiar to Latin tragic style (see Coffey and Mayer on Sen. *Phaedr.* 416).

exsecrabilis *Exsecrabilis* can have an active sense (= *perniciosus, pestifer*) (*TLL* 5.1834.32–43) or a passive one (= *odiosus, inuisus*) (*TLL* 5.1834.44–50). In this context, where physical contact is mentioned, to ascribe an active meaning to *exsecrabilis* would be most effective, since it would highlight Oedipus' sense of contagion, creating a climax to the series of epithets. However, *exsecrabilis* in an active sense is rare and nowhere else is it applied to a person. Hirschberg *ad loc.* takes *exsecrabilis* to mean 'accursed'.

On iambic lines in Seneca which end in a word of five syllables, see Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 660 who observes that there are seventeen of these, more than half of which (including this instance) involve words with similar connotations; also Zwierlein, *Proleg.*, 229–30.

224 aure concipio sonos *Concipio*, when applied to the senses, is more commonly used of visual perception (*TLL* 4.59.9–10); it seems to occur with reference to hearing only at Apul. *Mund.* 15 *obtutus uelocius inlustriora contingit, auditus, dum ad aures uenit, seriore sensu concipitur*; *Carm. Epigr.* 1319.2 *et mea post habitum rogantis concipere uerba.* The closest parallel to the form of expression found here occurs in the post-classical Claudian, *Carm. Min.* 18.8 *barbaricos docili concipit aure sonos.*

224–5 Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 388 *mixtumque nomen coniugis gnati patris.* This sentence is ambiguous, since *parentis* could refer to either of Oedipus' parents as well as to himself, and *nati* could apply equally to Oedipus and to either of his sons. The ambiguity is probably deliberate, since it reinforces the effect of *incestificus* (223). The traditional attachment of a man to his parents and offspring is ironically inverted.

226–9 The desire of Oedipus to destroy his hearing appears to have its origin in S. *OT.* 1386–9:

ἀλλ'εἰ τῆς ἀκουούσης ἔτ'ἦν
πηγῆς δι'ὤτων φαργμός, οὐκ ἂν ἐσχόμην
τὸ μὴ ἀποκλῆσαι τοὐμὸν ἄθλιον δέμας,
ἵν 'ἠ τυφλός τε καὶ κλύων μηδέν.

(see Intro., 20). Seneca characteristically embellishes the Sophoclean version: Sophocles' Oedipus wishes only to block up his source of hearing, whereas the Senecan Oedipus desires actually to rip out the passages along which sounds travel. The idea that Oedipus' ability to hear prevents him from achieving the complete isolation which he desires is alluded to also at Sen. *Oedip.* 1012–14, where Jocasta's address to the now blind Oedipus evokes the response: *Quis frui tenebris uetat?/ quis reddit oculos? matris, en matris sonus!/ perdidimus operam.*

229–30 nata . . . pater Seneca deliberately uses family terms, emphatically placed, in order to reinforce the sense of *quae pars meorum es criminum*: Antigone is part of Oedipus' crimes precisely in that she is his sister as well as his daughter.

231 inhaeret et recrudescit nefas For the use of *inhaereo* with emotions or ideas, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 108.26 *Inhaereat istud animo et tamquam missum oraculo placeat* and *Ira* 1.19.5.

The primary meaning of *recrudesco* (= 're-open') applies to wounds. Here, it refers to Oedipus' guilt, portrayed as breaking out again after a period during which it was dormant (see on *nouos* 206). For a

similar use of *recrudesco*, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 56.9 *in illa latebra . . . interdum recrudescit ambitio.*

Nefas here refers to Oedipus' *awareness* of his crimes, rather than to the crimes themselves; cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1098–9 *proxima puris/ sors est manibus nescire nefas* (contrast Sen. *Med.* 122, where *nefas* = 'capacity for crime').

232–3 aures ingerunt quidquid mihi/ donastis, oculi. Translate: 'My ears force upon me all that you have spared me, my eyes'. *Ingero* has a definite hostile nuance, as it does in Sen. *Ben.* 6.41.2 *Quanto melius ac iustius in promptu habere merita amicorum et offerre, non ingerere* and Tac. *Or.* 7.3 *quorum nomina prius parentes liberis suis ingerunt?*

Dono here = *condono* ('spare') (*OLD dono* 4). *Negastis* of *A* makes Oedipus' blindness sound like a burden, rather than the gift which it is to him.

233 caput tenebris graue A clever use by Seneca of a very common form of synecdoche: on the surface, the expression means 'myself, burdened with gloom', but Oedipus' *caput* is also literally *tenebris graue* in that he is blind (for *tenebrae* used of the darkness resulting from blindness, cf. Lucr. 3.413–14 *at si tantula pars oculi media illa peresa est,/ . . . tenebrae sequuntur*; Ov. *Met.* 3.515–16, where Pentheus mocks Teiresias, *tenebrasque et cladem lucis ademptae obicit*; Stat. *Theb.* 4.407–8 *tenebrasque sagaces/ Tiresiae*). *Tenebris* may also carry a suggestion of the darkness of the underworld (cf. *umbras* 234).

233–6 For wishes for death in Senecan drama, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 1202–18; *Phaedr.* 1184–90, 1201–10; *Oedip.* 926–33; *Thyest.* 1043–4; also [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 844–73.

234 ad umbras Ditis aeternas Although the sense would be virtually unaffected by *aeterni* (*E*), in terms of the rhetoric *aeternas* (*A*) is more effective: it is more direct and the *-as* ending adds to the harsh alliterative effect of the sibilants. Also, *aeternas* results in the elegant positioning of a genitive (*Ditis*) between a noun and adjective in agreement.

For the unusual sense-pause before the final foot, cf. 205, 495; also Sen. *Med.* 125, *Phaedr.* 713, *Troad.* 42 (Strzelecki, 13).

234–5 quid hic/ manes meos detineo Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1258 *Cur animam in ista luce detineam amplius.*

235 [quid] . . . mixtusque superis erro? Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 949–

51 *quaeratur uia/ qua nec sepultis mixtus et uiuis tamen/ exemptus erres.*

236 quid restat mali Oedipus' question is a bizarre justification of his wish to die, i.e. 'why should I continue to live when there is no more evil left for me to do?' Cf. 48 *nullum facere iam possum scelus?* For similar revelling in guilt, cf. also Oedipus' words at 305, 331–47.

237–40 Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 379–82, where likewise there is a catalogue of what Hercules has lost (*patrem abstulisti, regna, germanos, larem/ patrium*) and a statement that something remains (*una res superest mihi*), the revelation of which comes as a surprise (*odium tui*).

237 uirtus *Virtus* is used here in a very general sense. It might best be translated as 'manly worth', which would encompass physical, mental, and moral qualities.

238 ingeni sollertis eximium decus I.e. the glory which Oedipus gained when he outwitted the Sphinx.

239 periere Oedipus' kingdom, his children, and his mother are dead to him since he has cut himself off from them, with the exception of Antigone.

cuncta sors mihi infesta abstulit Oedipus, overwhelmed with self-pity, forgets that he abdicated of his own free will (cf. 105), and that his isolation from Jocasta and his sons was of his own choosing, since there is nowhere any indication that his exile was not self-imposed.

240 lacrimae supererant: has quoque eripui mihi Cf. Sen. *Contr.* 7.4.9, where an epigram of the rhetorician, Festus, based on the notion that the blind cannot weep (*magis flebilis est quod non potest flere*) is described as *falsissima*, which M. Winterbottom (*The Elder Seneca: Declamations* vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1974) translates as 'ill-founded'. *E* has *eripuit*, *A eripui*, which is the reading favoured by most modern editors. *Eripui* is probably correct: it is the *lectio difficilior* (with *abstulit* in the previous verse and the preceding *quoque*, *eripuit* would be the more obvious reading) and it is rhetorically more effective because it is surprising: Oedipus, has ascribed all his miseries to *sors infesta*, and one might expect him to held her responsible for his blindness too.

241 absiste At this point, Antigone must be imagined to have made some gesture of restraint or to have tried to speak – perhaps the latter in view of *preces*.

242 nouamque poenam sceleribus quaerit parem *Parem* is emphatically placed: the implication is that Oedipus' previous punishment, his self-blinding, was not sufficient expiation for his crimes.

243–62 Oedipus' question, *et esse par quae poterit?*, is left dangling, as he moves on to an account of the unfortunate beginnings of his life which eventually brings him back to the subject of his crimes (260). His account is selective and twisted: there is no mention of the oracle as a result of which Oedipus was feared; *mors quoque refugit* (259) assumes that the audience knows that a shepherd rescued Oedipus, took him to Corinth, etc.; *praestiti Delphis fidem* (259) suggests that Oedipus' murder of Laius was, ironically, a pious act of obedience to Apollo; in 260, Seneca makes Oedipus ignore the part of the legend in which Laius is said to have initiated the quarrel which prompted Oedipus to kill him; in 261, *pietas redimet* implies, with black humour, that Oedipus' incest was an act of atonement for the murder of Laius. Seneca is not providing background information for his audience; rather, it would appear that he assumes a knowledge of the legend (see Intro., 13 n.45), against which he intends the audience to measure Oedipus' version, a version which reveals the extent of Oedipus' *furor* and the depth of his belief in his own guilt (see also on 251 *sed numquid et peccauit* and 252–3).

244 decreta mors est For the expression, cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 258 *Decreta mors est: quaeritur fati genus.*

245 uideram nondum diem Seneca's choice of this periphrasis for birth (influenced, possibly, by Ov. *Am.* 2.14.22 *uidissem nullos matre negante dies*) is deliberate: Oedipus, who now does not see the light, was under sentence of death before he ever saw the light.

solueram . . . moras Cf. Sen. *Troad.* 1126–7 *hi classis moram/ hac morte solui rentur.* For the defining genitive, *uteri . . . clausi*, cf. Sen. *Troad.* 681 *rumpe fatorum moras.*

247–9 The topos in poetry of the untimely death of infants goes back to Verg. *Aen.* 6.426–9:

continuo auditae uoces uagitus et ingens
infantumque animae flentes, in limine primo
quos dulcis uitae exsortis et ab ubere raptos
abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo.

See R.G. Austin (*P. Vegili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus* (Oxford, 1977)) on *Aen.* 427 for further references.

249 mors me antecessit The sense of the conceit is clear: unlike those whom death snatches as soon as they have been born, Oedipus was not yet born before death (i.e. the *sentence* of death) overcame him.

251 sed numquid et peccauit *Numquid*, like *num*, assumes a negative response. Tarrant on Sen. *Thyest.* 6 observes that 'Seneca is the only classical writer who freely uses *numquid* in high poetry'. It occurs thirteen times in his tragedies (and three times in the *Herc. Oet.*) (see Denooz, 258), always in rhetorical questions, and usually in a series of two or more such questions: so, e.g., *Herc. Fur.* 1180–1, *Thyest.* 197–8, 804–12. In general, *numquid* was regarded as a colloquialism and it occurs freely in comedy, Horace's *Satires*, Petronius, and Seneca's prose works.

Et implies that, by contrast, Oedipus *had* sinned. Seneca bizarrely depicts him as having committed a crime worthy of the death penalty while still in *utero.*

252 dubiumque an essem Cf. Quint. *Decl.* 277.7 (ed. Winterbottom) *qui an nasci posset dubium fuit.*

252–3 sceleris infandi reum/ deus egit *Reum ago* with a genitive of the crime is standard legal jargon (*OLD reus* 3d). Its use here highlights the incongruity of the situation as presented by Seneca, in which an unborn child is portrayed as being a defendant in a capital case; cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 34 *scilicet Phoebi reus. Sceleris infandi* refers to Oedipus' murder of Laius, and *reum deus egit* alludes to the oracle of Apollo which predicted Laius' murder at the hands of his son. Cf. Jocasta's unwillingness to hold Apollo himself responsible for the oracle in S. *OT.* 711–2 χρησμὸς γὰρ ἦλθε Λαΐῳ ποτ', οὐκ ἐρῶ/ Φοίβου γ'ἀπ'αὐτοῦ, τῶν δ'ὑπηρετῶν ἄπο.

253–7 Cf. S. *OT.* 718–19, where all that is said is: καί νιν ἄρθρα κεῖνος ἐνζεύξας ποδοῖν/ ἔρριψεν ἄλλων χερσὶν εἰς ἄβατον ὄρος. This illustrates well the difference between the terse style of the Greek tragedian, to whom the poetry is primarily a vehicle for the development of the plot, and the flamboyance of Seneca, to whom the rhetoric is an end in itself.

253 illo teste damnauit parens *Illo teste* = 'with him (Apollo) as witness', rather than Miller's 'on that evidence': Seneca continues the legal metaphor, casting Laius as the judge, Apollo as the chief witness, and the unborn Oedipus as the defendant. Cf. 412 *nullum teste me fiet nefas.*

254 calidoque teneros transuit ferro pedes For the five-word grouping, cf. 95 and see note *ad loc.*

Teneros is a reminder of the extreme youth of Oedipus when he was exposed (according to the tradition, he was not yet three days old; cf. S. *OT.* 717–18). The juxtaposition of *calido* and *teneros* stresses the cruel nature of Oedipus' fate. Charles Segal ('Boundary Violation and the Landscape of the Self in Senecan Tragedy' *A&A* 29 (1983), 172–87 at 177) sees Laius' piercing of Oedipus' feet as an answer to 'the son's illicit penetration of the mother's womb even in being born (*Phoen.* 245–7)' and as 'an act of symbolic castration'; this is psychological interpretation carried beyond the bounds of reason.

As Gronovius observed, *transuit* of *E* (*A* has *transtulit*) is supported by Ov. *Fast.* 2.363–4 *dumque sacerdotes ueribus transuta salignis/ exta parant*; Col. 6.5.4 *media pars descripti orbiculi eadem fibula transuitur*; also Cels. 5.26.23D, 7.7.8B.

255–6 pabulum . . . feris/ auibusque saeuis Cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 750–1 *auibus epulandos licet/ ferisque triste pabulum saeuis trahat*, 1032 *Utrumne saeuis pabulum alitibus iacent*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1463 *pabulum accipiant ferae.* Sophocles does not mention the wild animals on Cithaeron, but in Sen. *Oedip.* 931–2, after the anagnorisis, Oedipus begs Cithaeron: *uel feras in me tuis/ emitte siluis.*

256 Cithaeron noxius Cf. 35, where Cithaeron is described as *semper cruente saeue crudelis ferox*, both because of the members of the royal house of Thebes who have died there, and, paradoxically, because Oedipus was not allowed to die there. Here, the second notion is absent, but Oedipus returns to the association of Cithaeron with death in the Theban royal family.

258–9 sed quem deus damnauit, abiecit pater,/ mors quoque refugit Apollo is now cast as the judge instead of as the chief witness; cf. 253. The final part of the tricolon, *mors quoque refugit*, comes as a surprise: Seneca has built up a pathetic picture of the infant Oedipus, victimised by Apollo and rejected by his father, only to undermine it by revealing that Oedipus would actually have welcomed death, but that death, paradoxically, shunned him. For the expression, cf. Sen. *Troad.* 954 *prima mors miseros fugit*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 766 *Mors refugit illum.*

260 genitorem adortus impia straui nece Seneca ignores the traditional extenuating circumstance – that Laius struck the first blow

(cf. S. *OT.* 808–9; Sen. *Oedip.* 770–1). Because Oedipus is not concerned with his *legal* guilt, but with his moral and religious pollution, which no extenuating circumstance can minimise, he gives only the fact that is crucial to him: that he murdered his father. *Nece* here has the specific sense of 'murder', as at 106–7 *sed notum nece/ ensem paterna*; contrast 103–4 *uitae ac necis/ meae penes me est.*

261 hoc alia pietas redimet *Pietas* here = '*an act of* piety' (so *Phoen.* 97–8 *pietatem uocas/ patrem insepultum trahere*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 986 *haec erit pietas scelus.* The first act of piety was killing Laius (cf. 259 *praestiti Delphis fidem:/ . . . impia . . . nece.* Seneca here continues the paradox, as, with black humour, he portrays Oedipus' incestuous love for his mother as being an act of compensation (*redimet*) for the murder of his father. Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that *pietas* is used with similar irony at Sen. *Med.* 904–5 *quidquid admissum est adhuc,/ pietas uocetur.*

261–2 occidi patrem,/ sed matrem amaui For the antithesis, cf. Sen. *Contr.* 7.5.9 *maritum occidit, adulteram strinxit.* The chiasmus throws *amaui* into relief and there is some play on the semantic range of *amo*: loving one's mother in a filial way is good and pious, but Oedipus' sexual love for his mother was neither good nor pious. For *amo* used euphemistically of sexual intercourse, cf., e.g., Sen. *Phaedr.* 115–17 *infando malo/ correpta pecoris efferum saeui ducem/ audax amasti*; Mart. 3.58.38 *alius* [*porrigit*] *coactos non amare capones* (see Adams, *Lat. Sex. Vocab.*, 188). The paradox in *occidi patrem,/ sed matrem amaui* may have been suggested to Seneca by Ov. *Met.* 314–15 (of Myrrha's incestuous relationship with her father) *scelus est odisse parentem:/ hic amor est odio maius scelus,* and the play on *amo* at Ov. *Met.* 336–7 *dignus amari/ ille, sed ut pater, est.*

262–3 proloqui hymenaeum pudet/ taedasque nostras? Zwierlein (OCT) follows Bentley in punctuating with a question mark, and maintains that this punctuation is suppported by 450 *an dico et ex quo?* (*Krit. Komm.*, 122). Apart from the fact that both 262–3 and 450 refer to the horror of Oedipus' incestuous marriage, there seems to be little justification for believing that the latter passage (a question addressed by Jocasta to her sons) supports the former's being cast as a question also. Rather, it is the context of 262–3 which is the determining factor, since *proloqui . . . nostras* punctuated as a statement ('I am ashamed to speak of my marriage'), fits somewhat awkwardly with the hortatory *has quoque inuitum pati/ te coge poenas* (263–4).

263 quoque I.e. in addition to the punishments which he has already borne (viz. being condemned to death *in utero* and being left to die on Cithaeron) and to those which he intends to inflict upon himself.

263–4 has . . . poenas *Has* refers to what follows: *facinus ignotum efferum/ inusitatum fare* (264–5). For *hic* used in this way, cf., e.g., Cic. *Att.* 11.12.1 *his uerbis ad Caesarem scripsi: de Quinto fratre . . .* ; Sen. *Suas.* 2.2 *hunc sumite animum: . . . uinci non possumus* (*OLD hic* 5a). Seneca probably uses the plural here for the sake of the harsh effect of the sibilants.

264–5 ignotum efferum/ inusitatum For the accumulation of epithets in asyndeton, cf. 224 *nefandus incestificus exsecrabilis*, and Sen. *Med.* 395 *magnum aliquid instat, efferum immane impium. Efferum* is commonly used by Seneca, as here, in a transferred sense: cf. *Med.* 385 *recursat huc et huc motu effero*; *Troad.* 51 *caede effera.*

265 quod populi horreant The plural implies that Oedipus' crime is regarded as unspeakable not only by the Greeks but by every nation. As evidence for Roman abhorrence of incest, Liebeschuetz (*Continuity and Change*, 42 n.1) notes that slaves could be tortured to give evidence against their masters on this charge; the only other case where this was permissible in the first century AD was a treason trial. Ovid (*Met.* 10.314–5) says of Myrrha's passion for her father: *scelus est odisse parentem,/ hic amor est odio maius scelus.* Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.19.1) records that Tiberius had Sextus Marius thrown from the Tarpeian Rock on the charge of having committed incest with his daughter. Apuleius (*Met.* 10.2) calls the stepmother's lust for her stepson an *extremum . . . flagitium*, and Suetonius numbers incest among the most heinous crimes of both Gaius and Nero (*Calig.* 24, *Nero* 28).

266 quod esse factum nulla non aetas neget Cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 753–4 *o nullo scelus/ credibile in aeuo quodque posteritas neget.* The accumulation of negatives results in a strong positive assertion, reinforced by the alliteration.

267 quod parricidam pudeat Seneca is being witty in saying that even a parricide, the worst type of criminal, would shrink from incest, since a parricide is precisely what Oedipus is.

267–8 in patrios toros/ tuli paterno sanguine aspersas manus The horror of Oedipus' incest is emphasised by the repetition *patrios . . . paterno*: it would have been bad enough if Oedipus had slept with his mother without having committed any other crime, but

his having done so while actually polluted by parricide was to compound his pollution to an almost inconceivable degree. For the horror of contact with one so polluted, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 372–3 *Egone ut parentis sanguine aspersam manum/ fratrumque gemina caede contingam?*

Torus here denotes the bed specifically as the scene of sexual activity: cf. Val. Fl. 159–60 *nostrosque toros uirgata tenebit/ et plaustro derepta nurus*; Tac. *Ann.* 15.37 (*OLD torus* 5a). Contrast *Phoen.* 357 [*nefas*] . . . *quod meos deceat toros*, where *torus* = *matrimonium*, as commonly in Senecan drama (see Canter, 132).

Apart from its use at *Herc. Fur.* 135, *aspersa die dumeta rubent*, Fitch *ad loc.* observes that *aspergo* in Senecan drama is always associated with blood: cf. *Herc. Fur.* 372, *Troad.* 256, 1107, *Thyest.* 95.

269 scelerisque pretium maius accepi scelus With macabre wit, Seneca makes Oedipus describe Jocasta as being the prize for his parricide; cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 634–5 *rex cruentus, pretia qui saeuae necis/ sceptra et nefandos occupat thalamos patris*. *Accipio* is used here ironically with the sense of 'welcome': 'as the prize for my crime, I welcomed an even greater crime' (cf. Stat. *Theb.* 12.690–1 *en iterum qui moenia nostra lacessant./ accipimus, ueniant*).

maius scelus Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 17 . . . *aliudque nobis maius indicunt scelus* (i.e. incest), 629–30 *maximum Thebis scelus/ maternus amor est.* This view of incest as a more heinous crime than parricide is unique to Seneca. Fantham (1983), 72–3, observes that, of earlier writers, only Catullus includes incest at all in the catalogue of family-related crimes (64.403–6): for Lucretius (3.70–3) and Lucan (2.147–51), fratricide was the ultimate horror. At Verg. *Aen.* 6.621–4, incest is put on a par with treason.

270 leue est paternum facinus In order to emphasise the enormity of Oedipus' incest, Seneca dismisses his murder of Laius as a trivial offence by comparison. Cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 47, *Med.* 905–7, where, likewise, crimes which would ordinarily be considered as heinous are dismissed as negligible.

271 ne parum sceleris foret Oedipus is sarcastic, saying that his mother became pregnant so that he might not seem to have committed too few crimes. For the tone, in a similar context, cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.468–9 (of Myrrha's incest with her father) *'filia' dixit,/ dixit et illa 'pater', sceleri ne nomina desint.*

272 fecunda *Fecunda* here = *concepit* or *peperit.* Cf., e.g., Ov. *Trist.* 4.10.75–6 *filia me mea bis prima fecunda iuuenta/ . . . fecit auum*; *Met.*

2.471–2 *hoc etiam restabat, adultera, dixit,/ ut fecunda fores* (with Bömer *ad loc.* for further examples).

273–4 nullum crimen hoc maius potest/ natura ferre Oedipus grades his crimes: his parricide was *leue* (270), his incest was a *maius scelus* (269), and the greatest crime is that he sired children (cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 745–6, where the Chorus asks with regard to Atreus' crime, *An ultra maius aut atrocius/ natura recepit?*). This oblique reference to children serves as an introduction to the theme of the fraternal strife which dominates the rest of the fragment (273–362).

273 si quod etiamnum est tamen Sc. *maius crimen.* For *tamen* in a conditional clause expressing a proviso, cf. Plin. *Ep.* 3.1.4 *liber legitur, interdum etiam praesentibus amicis, si tamen illi non grauantur* (*OLD tamen* 5b).

273–306 This is the third allusion to the forthcoming strife of the brothers and the most detailed so far (cf. also 53–8 and 108–10, and see commentary *ad loc.*). Seneca is building up to the Nuntius' request in the next act that he intervene before Eteocles and Polyneices lead their armies into battle (326–7), and ultimately to the dominance of the theme of the fraternal conflict in the second fragment (323ff.).

Oedipus' presentiment of the ruin coming upon Thebes has no parallel among the human characters in Senecan drama. It can, however, be compared with the prophecy of Agamemnon's murder (*Agam.* 37–52) by the Ghost of Thyestes, although Opelt, 276, goes too far when she describes Oedipus as the embodiment of the spirit of the curse on his house, just as the Ghost of Thyestes in *Agam.* and the Ghost of Tantalus in *Thyest.* embody the spirit of the curse on their respective houses. There is never any doubt that the prophecy of the Ghost of Thyestes will be fulfilled and that Agamemnon will be murdered, because the legend demands it. The dramatic interest of the play lies not in *what* happens, but in *how* it happens – how Clytemnaestra overcomes her moment of weakness, how Cassandra's vision of the murder goes unheeded, etc. Oedipus' vision is different. He foresees that *non leuis fessis uenit/ ruina Thebis* (284–5). This does not mean, however, that, had Seneca completed the play (see Intro., 1ff. for a discussion of the state of the play), he would have portrayed the destruction of Thebes. Just as the legend of the house of Atreus demands that Agamemnon be murdered, so the legend of the house of Thebes demands that Thebes be saved by the mutual slaughter of the brothers. Thus, the prophecy of the Ghost of Thyestes has to come true, while the destruction envisioned by Oedipus cannot actu-

ally strike Thebes. (It must be acknowledged that Oedipus never explicitly says that Thebes will be destroyed; he declares only that ruin is *on its way* (*uenit* 284), and that weapons, flames, and wounds *threaten* (*instant* 286). Nevertheless, the most natural interpretation of his words is that destruction is on its way *and will arrive*.) This points to the intention of Seneca to include in his play the mutual murder of the brothers by which Thebes is saved. Seneca does not allow the visionary powers of Oedipus to extend to the mutual murder, although there are two cryptic references which may have been intended as pointers to the audience: *nemo sine sacro feret/ illud cruore* (278) and *et istis si quod est maius malum* (286).

Seneca's dramatic purpose in the vision of Oedipus is thus different from that in the prophecy of the Ghost of Thyestes. The prophecy of the latter removes all dramatic suspense on the level of plot, because the audience knows what is to happen. The vision of the former, however, creates dramatic suspense, in that the audience is left wondering how the fulfillment of Oedipus' prophecy will be avoided. The traditional curse of Oedipus on his sons plays no significant role in the play (see on 355).

274–5 abieci necis/ pretium paternae sceptrum *Abieci* indicates that Oedipus abdicated voluntarily; cf. also 104 *regna deserui libens*. Cf. 269 (of Jocasta) *scelerisque pretium maius accepi scelus*: like Jocasta, the throne was a 'prize' for Oedipus' parricide.

275–6 et hoc iterum manus/ armauit alias The *manus* referred to are those of Eteocles, the usurper. The metaphor whereby the sceptre is depicted as a weapon (*armauit*) refers to the impending battle for the throne between the brothers. Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 341–2 *rapta sed trepida manu/ sceptra obtinentur; omnis in ferro est salus*.

277–8 nemo sine sacro feret/ illud cruore Cf. 648–9, where Jocasta also predicts trouble for anyone who rules Thebes: *sceptra Thebano fuit/ impune nulli gerere*. . . . For the expression, cf. Luc. 3.124–5 *nullasque feres nisi sanguine sacro/ sparsas, raptor, opes*. *Sacro . . . cruore* alludes to the blood of a kinsman, considered sacred because of the religious bond of *pietas* linking members of a family to one another and to the gods; it may be a veiled reference to the mutual slaughter of the brothers (see on 273–306).

278–9 magna praesagit mala/ paternus animus Formulaic language, particularly common in drama: Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.*

1147b–8, *nescioquod animus grande praesagit malum*, cites numerous parallels; in Senecan tragedy, cf. especially *Thyest.* 958 *mens ante sui praesaga mali* (also *Thyest.* 267–70, *Med.* 917–18).

279 iacta iam sunt semina Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 122) notes that the word order of *E*, *iam sunt* (*A* has *sunt iam*), is supported by Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 123 *Mouenda iam sunt bella.*

280–2 It is clear from these lines that Eteocles and Polyneices had agreed to rule alternately (cf. also 324, 378), but Seneca does not specify for how long; cf. E. *Ph.* 484ff., where the arrangement is that they will each be king for a year at a time. Again, Seneca may be assuming background knowledge on the part of his audience (see on 243–62).

280 spernitur pacti fides *Fides* is the key word here: the bond of *fides* was sacred (see Walter, 104), and the Romans well knew that broken *fides* brought divine punishment (cf., e.g., Liv. 5.21, 9.1); the breaking of a *pactum* between brothers, which implied *impietas* as well as broken *fides*, might be expected to provoke the gods to extreme wrath.

281–2 hic . . . ille Nowhere in *Phoen.* are Eteocles and Polyneices identified by name. This is probably due, in part, to the assumption that the audience would know which was which, but also to the fact that the identity of the brothers is of little significance: the first fragment revolves around the *affectus* of Oedipus, the second around that of Jocasta, and the brothers have dramatic importance only insofar as they provoke the emotional outbursts of their parents (cf. the role of Polyneices in S. *OC.*) Moreover, the non-naming of the brothers is part of the pattern of the deliberate and rhetorical use of family terms in *Phoen.* (see on *nata* 2 and 182–215). What is interesting here is the fact that there seems to be an avoidance by Seneca of the family term, *natus*: from 272 onwards, when the subject of the fraternal conflict is introduced, Seneca does not refer to the brothers as Oedipus' sons (cf. also 274 *qui facere possent* and 275–6 *manus . . . alias*). The reluctance for this family term suggests Oedipus' dissociation and estrangement from his sons, and lends considerable impact to his bitter acknowledgement of them in the final verse of his speech, *ut esse genitos nemo non ex me sciat* (287).

282 icti foederis Miller translates incorrectly as 'the broken bond'. *Foedus ico* = 'make an agreement' (cf., e.g., Liv. 1.24.3 *foedus ictum inter Romanos et Albanos est*; Luc. 10.371–2 *per . . . ictum sanguine Magni/ foedus*).

Polyneices is reminding the gods of the pact that he and Eteocles made, rather than pointing out to them the broken agreement.

282–3 ius . . . inuocat Polyneices invokes his right to rule according to the pact which he made with Eteocles (see on 280–2).

283–4 et Argos exul atque urbes mouet/ Graias in arma Seneca does not here explain the connection between Polyneices and Argos, perhaps because there is no rhetorical advantage to be gained from so doing. In the second fragment (363–664), however, Jocasta soon mentions Polyneices' marriage to Adrastus' daughter (374–7), thereby preparing the way for her lament (which has its origin in E. *Ph.* 338ff.) that she was not able to assist at the wedding. On the Roman significance of *exul*, see Walter, 63–4.

284–5 fessis . . . Thebis For *fessis* used of places, cf. Liv. 26.32.2 *urbem . . . non fessam miseranda seruitute*; Val. Fl. 5.278–9 *nox . . . / retulerat fessis . . . silentia terris*; Amm. 14.11.11 *prouinciae diu fessae.* The weariness of Thebes is the result of all the trials she has endured: the Sphinx, the plague, the horrifying discovery of Oedipus' true identity, and now, the conflict of Eteocles and Polyneices (see Wurnig, *Gefühlsdarstellungen*, 102–3).

285 tela flammae uulnera Cf. the asyndeta in the prophecy of the Ghost of Thyestes in Sen. *Agam.* 45–8, and see Canter, 169–70, for further instances in Senecan drama.

286 et istis si quod est maius malum A cryptic clause; perhaps Seneca intended his audience to see an allusion to the mutual murder of the brothers (see on 273–306).

287 ut esse genitos nemo non ex me sciat This reveals the same kind of twisted thinking as does 305–6 *morique propero, dum in domo nemo est mea/ nocentior me.* Characteristically, Oedipus sees the prospect of the destruction of Thebes only in terms of himself.

288–90 Antigone seizes on the new element in Oedipus' emotional outburst, the threatening war between the brothers, in a final attempt to dissuade him from death. The abundance of family terms is significant: Antigone appeals to Oedipus as her father and as the father of Eteocles and Polyneices to intervene between his sons, thereby unconsciously raising again the confusion of relationships in the family. Seneca clearly intends this to be ironical, since it is nowhere suggested that Antigone, although she must be aware of the ambivalent nature of Oedipus' relationship to her, thinks of him other than

straightforwardly as her father. Similarly, Oedipus, although very conscious of the horror of his incestuous marriage, does not appear to consider Antigone as anything other than his daughter.

289 abunde est The expression is common in prose but rare in poetry (see *TLL* 1.230.40–65), although it occurs also at Sen. *Thyest.* 105 and 279; cf. [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 860.

regas A clever choice of word in the context: Oedipus, the former ruler, is asked to 'rule' his sons, who are competing for the right to rule Thebes.

290–4 Walter, 129, observes: 'Mit bellum impium, cives, patria, foedus laesum und fides . . . steht hier pax innerhalb einer politischen Begriffsreihe ausgesprochen römischen Charakters'.

290 grauiter furentes There is some irony in the fact that Oedipus, himself *iratus,* should be asked to control his raging sons.

291 unus Oedipus is not, of course, the only one who could reconcile the brothers – there is Jocasta too – but Seneca makes Antigone, in her eagerness to persuade Oedipus to carry on living, exaggerate the desperate need for his intervention. The repetition of *tu* (290, 291) gives urgency to Antigone's plea.

293–4 ciuibus pacem dare,/ patriae quietem, foederi laeso fidem For the tricolon, cf. Caes. *BC.* 3.57.4 *quietem Italiae, pacem prouinciarum, salutem imperii uni omnes acceptam.* Seneca reserves *foederi laeso* until last, since that is the condition on which the first two parts of the tricolon depend and the culmination of Antigone's request: unless the brothers can be persuaded to return to the terms of their agreement, there will be no lasting peace.

294 uitam tibi ipse si negas, multis negas This *sententia,* with its apparent illogicality, neatly summarises Antigone's argument: Oedipus alone can reconcile the brothers and so restore peace to Thebes; if he kills himself, he will be responsible also for the deaths of those who will fall in the war.

295 Illis parentis ullus aut aequi est amor An elliptical response: [No, I shall not intervene; how could you think they would listen to me since . . .]. The implication of *parentis ullus . . . amor* is that if Eteocles and Polyneices loved their father, they would not have started a quarrel which they knew would distress him.

296–7 auidis cruoris imperi armorum doli,/ diris, scelestis Cf. Sen. *Agam.* 47 *scelera . . . dolus caedes cruor.*

Oedipus does not differentiate between his sons. The fact that Polyneices clearly has some cause for grievance does not weigh with him. Polyneices' instigation of a war against his brother is a crime of such enormous impiety that it places him firmly in the same category as his brother. In S. *OC.*, Oedipus curses both sons with impartial fervour (421–7, 1375–93), but in that play both sons had incurred his wrath because of their neglect of him (cf. also E. *Ph.* 63–8), and Polyneices, although the injured party in the fraternal conflict, was especially culpable in that he was on the throne when Oedipus was sent into exile (1354ff.).

297 breuiter ut dicam This prosaic expression (see *TLL* 2.2184.60–71) does not occur elsewhere in Senecan drama; the closest parallel is at *Herc. Fur.* 401, where Lycus says: *pauca pro causa loquar.*

meis For this use of *meis*, cf. Sen. *Med.* 934–5 *occidant, non sunt mei;/ pereant, mei sunt.* The brothers are recognisable as Oedipus' sons, not because of their particular criminal tendencies – Oedipus did not lust after blood, power, arms, or treachery – but because of their general propensity for evil, and, more specifically, for evil involving the family. Seneca has little use for the outmoded divine machinery of Greek tragedy: in his dramas, the crimes that are committed by one generation after another in a family are attributable at least as much (and in *Phoen.*, entirely) to an hereditary criminal tendency as to the operation of a continuing curse on the house. Cf., e.g., Sen. *Agam.*, where the Ghost of Thyestes, although embodying the curse on the house, serves more to create a sinister atmosphere for the opening of the drama, and the murder of Agamemnon is attributed to the fact that Aegisthus is Thyestes' son and Clytemnestra is Helen's sister (906–7); Sen. *Phaedr.* 126–7, where, in explanation of her passion for Hippolytus, Phaedra says that Venus punishes all the descendants of Phoebus *probris . . . nefandis,* but acknowledges also the hereditary nature of her unnatural love (113). Tarrant on *Agam.* 906f. notes that Seneca's rhetorical exploitation of the idea of a family propensity for crime is not peculiar to him; he cites by way of precedent, Cic. *Tusc.* 4.77 *ut facile appareat Atrei filios esse*; Ov. *Her.* 4.61–2 *en, ego nunc, ne forte parum Minoia credar,/ in socias leges ultima gentis eo*; cf. also Ov. *Trist.* 4.5.31, *Pont.* 2.8.32 on the moral resemblance of child to parent proving parentage. See also on 82–4.

298 certant in omne facinus For the thought, cf. Luc. 1.5–6 *certatum totis concussi uiribus orbis/ in commune nefas.*

For the expression *certo in* + acc. (= 'vie in'), see in addition only Sen. *Contr.* 2.7.1 *ut in accessionem patrimoni peregrinatio cum uxore certarem.*

Rivalry in crime within the family is a topos of Senecan drama: cf. *Phoen.* 335–7; *Agam.* 25–6, 124, 169; *Thyest.* 18–20, 193–6; *Phaedr.* 142–4.

298–9 pensi nihil/ ducunt The expression is prosaic (*OLD pendo* 7; *TLL* 5.2156.44–64) and is striking here, coming as it does so shortly after the equally prosaic *breuiter ut dicam* (297).

299 ubi illos ira praecipites agit *Ubi* = *quo*, and the clause is almost parenthetical, the sense being: 'They vie in crime of every kind and consider nothing of consequence – to which [state] passion drives them headlong – and born through crime . . . '. *Agat* of *A* presumably takes *ubi . . . agat* as an indirect question dependent on *pensi nihil ducunt* (= 'and they do not care where anger is driving them headlong'), which gives adequate sense but is rhetorically less forceful than *ubi . . . agit* of *E.*

Leo's emendation to *ipsos* of the MSS' *illos* is not convincing, since the context does not demand an intensifying pronoun and Seneca uses *illis* in 295 and 301.

Ira has previously been associated only with Oedipus (163, 186); by attributing *ira* now also to the brothers, Seneca links father and sons, reinforcing Oedipus' assertion that Eteocles and Polyneices have revealed themselves to be truly his sons (296). See also on *manus* 329. Hirschberg *ad loc.* notes the parallel in *Ira* 3.20.4 *Agebat adhuc regem ira praecipitem.*

300 nefasque nullum per nefas nati putant Cf. 337 *sic estis orti*: the criminal tendencies of the parents are repeated in their offspring (see also on 82–4 and 297 *meis*). The alliteration reinforces the thought.

301 non patris illos tangit afflicti pudor *Pudor* = 'regard (for)', with *patris afflicti* an objective genitive (see *OLD pudor* 1c for parallels). *Tangit* = 'affects' (cf. English 'touches', which has both a physical and an emotional sense); for *tango* used of emotions, cf. also Sen. *Thyest.* 130–1 *quem tangit gelido flumine lucidus/ Alpheos.*

The verse has a specific rather than a general application: Seneca is not implying a general neglect of Oedipus by his sons, as in S. *OC.*; their lack of regard for him consists only in their preparation for war against each other.

304 leti quaero maturi uiam The reading of *A*, *maturi*, is preferable to *maturam* of *E*, since it is the death of Oedipus which is to be early, not the *uia* by which he achieves it. There may be some play on the expression *uia leti/ mortis*, which commonly means 'a way of dying' (*OLD uia* 8b); here, it has that sense, but, in view of Oedipus' location, it could also literally mean 'a way which will lead me to death' (cf. 5–6 *melius inueniam uiam,/ . . . quae me ab hac uita extrahat*).

305–6 dum in domo nemo est mea/ nocentior me Nicely ambiguous. On the surface, Oedipus is saying that he wants to die before he has to endure the pain of seeing his sons exceed the horror of his crimes, but the curious way in which Seneca expresses this thought, with the emphasis on Oedipus' guilt (cf. *mea . . . me*), suggests a hint of rivalry in crime. Cf. 336–7, where, conversely, Oedipus urges his sons to commit crimes greater than his own, so that he may be glad that he has lived so long.

306–7 Nata, quid genibus meis/ fles aduoluta For the expression *genibus aduoluor*, cf. Liv. 39.14.1 *aduoluta rursus genibus preces easdem . . . repetiuit*; Sen. *Phaedr.* 703 *iterum, superbe, genibus aduoluor tuis.*

Clearly, Seneca envisaged some action at this point: Antigone must be imagined to rush forward and throw herself weeping at her father's feet, perhaps embracing his knees in supplication. On this suppliant posture, see Sittl, *Gebärden*, 163–4.

307–19 Sudden changes of heart near the end of a scene are common in Senecan drama: cf. *Phaedr.* 251; *Thyest.* 488, 542; *Med.* 294–5; *Agam.* 307. Zwierlein (*Rezitationsdramen*, 108 n.42) observes that 'es Senecas Eigenart ist, ein Pathos-Motiv bis um äussersten auszuschöpfen . . . und dan ganz abrupt wieder in die Situation der Handlung zurückzuspringen'. With reference to Oedipus' capitulation here, Friedrich, 127, comments: 'Senecas Absicht, zum Schluss zu kommen, ist so deutlich, dass sie fast verstimmend wirken kann' (see also Wurnig, *Gefühlsdarstellungen*, 106 n.60). Oedipus' surrender does come as a surprise in that his resolve to die has shown no signs of weakening before Antigone's pleas. However, the extreme nature of Antigone's act of supplication – an act usually reserved for situations in which the life of the suppliant is threatened – goes some way towards explaining Oedipus' capitulation. Contrast the appeals of Hercules' son (Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1002–3) and of Andromache (Sen. *Troad.* 691–3) which fail, resulting in the murder of the former and of the latter's son; for an inversion of this type of plea, cf. *Phaedr.*, where Phaedra begs Hippolytus to kill her, but he refuses.

A close parallel to the debate on suicide between Oedipus and Antigone and to Oedipus' sudden yielding is found in Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1200ff.: both Oedipus and Hercules wish to die because of the horror of their past misdeeds and to avoid seeing the perpetration of further horrors (Oedipus anticipates the conflict between his sons, Hercules fears that he may turn on his father also); Antigone and Amphitryon both try to dissuade their kinsmen from suicide by presenting their deeds as *error* rather than *scelus* (cf. *Herc. Fur.* 1237, 1297, 1300–1); both Oedipus and Hercules, though apparently determined on death, yield at the last, not to the persuasions and arguments of their respective kinsmen, but to their final, desperate, non-verbal pleas (Antigone falls in tears at her father's feet, Amphitryon attempts to kill himself). Verbal parallels and echoes of thought between the two scenes exist also; particularly striking are: *Phoen.* 1–2 *fessi unicum/ patris leuamen* which is reminiscent of *Herc. Fur.* 1250–1 *unicum lapsae domus/ firmamen*; *Phoen.* 89–90 *unica Oedipodae est salus,/ non esse saluum* recalls *Herc. Fur.* 1262 *morte sanandum est scelus*; *Phoen.* 237–40 resembles *Herc. Fur.* 1259–61; *Phoen.* 319 *uel uiuet* recalls *Herc. Fur.* 1317 *uiuamus* (see further Otto Edert, *Über Senecas Herakles und den Herakles auf dem Oeta* (Diss. Kiel, 1909), 83–4; Zwierlein, *Senecas Hercules im Lichte*, 29).

307 quid prece indomitum domas? Cf. 241 *nullas animus admittit preces. Prece* here clearly does not refer to a verbal plea, but to the appeal implicit in Antigone's suppliant position (*pace* Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 62, who maintains that Seneca's failure to ascribe to Antigone words, to which *prece* refers, argues against his having intended the play for stage performance; see Intro., 37ff.).

For the etymological play in *indomitum domas*, cf. *Phoen.* 89 *salus, saluum*; 90 *ulcisci, inultum*; 222 *castam, incestificus*; 301 *patris, patria*; 427 *furenti*; *furit*; 482 *exarmatur, armatus* (for examples in the other plays, see Canter, 162).

308–9 unum hoc habet fortuna quo possim capi,/ inuictus aliis Oedipus declares that he can be moved, *capi* (cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 301–2 *faciles capi/ prece commouebo*), only by Antigone, and he goes on to say that for her sake he will live. In Stoic terms, this was the right decision to make (see on 77–9); in this respect, although not in his attitude towards his sons, Oedipus' *ratio* has triumphed over his *furor.*

310–11 sola pietatem in domo/ docere nostra Cf. 328–30, where Oedipus says: *Ego ille sum qui scelera comitti uetum/ et abstineri sanguine a caro manus/ doceam?*

310 mollire duros Antithesis resulting from the juxtaposition of single words of contrasted meaning is a rhetorical device which Seneca uses freely: cf. *Phoen.* 17 *sorores mater*, 65 *duobus omnis*, 307 *indomitum domas*, 411 *iuvenes anus* (for examples in the other plays, see Canter, 152–3).

312 impera Cf. also *iubente te* (314, 318, 319) and Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1315 *perfer imperium patris.* The reversal of traditional roles is noteworthy: the daughter commands her father by virtue of her position as the only member of the household who can teach *pietas* (310–11). In Roman elegy, imperiousness is a characteristic of mistresses and sometimes of wives (cf. Tib. 2.4.53, Prop. 3.16.2, 4.1.143–4, 4.8.81–2; Ov. *AA.* 2.223), but not of daughters.

Here, and in the following lines (313–19), Seneca employs a convention of love poetry – the lover offering to undergo great ordeals as proof of his devotion to his beloved (cf., e.g., Tib. 1.4.47–52, 2.4.52–60; Prop. 2.24b.25–8). His application of this topos to a father-daughter relationship is more than a literary parody: in the context of Oedipus' unnatural family relationships, it is subtly suggestive (cf. 49–50, where Oedipus makes explicit his fears of turning to Antigone with incestuous intent).

313 hic Oedipus Aegaea transnabit freta Leander swam the Hellespont, in the north-eastern corner of the Aegean, for the sake of Hero (cf., e.g., Ov. *AA.* 2.249–50, *Her.* 18,19). Seneca makes Oedipus surpass this feat by offering to swim right *across* the notoriously stormy Aegean (on the storminess of the Aegean, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 12.365–6; Hor. *Od.* 3.29.63). Seneca despises this feat in *Ira* 1.21.3 *uideatur et libido magni animi: transnat freta.*

Oedipus' reference to himself in the third person suggests self-conscious grandeur and self-detachment (see also on 89 and Rosenmayer, 180, 197–8).

314–16 flammasque quas Siculo uomit/ de monte tellus igneos uoluens globos/ excipiet ore The swallowing of burning coals as a means of committing suicide is attested in Vell. 2.88.3, but A.J. Woodman (*The Caesarian and Augustan Narrative: Velleius Paterculus 2.41–93* (Cambridge, 1977)) *ad loc.* expresses scepticism about this being a likely method of suicide (cf. also Sen. *Prov.* 6.9; Sil. 2.680; Mart. 1.42.5, and Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* IV.iii.154, where Portia, Brutus' wife, is said to have 'swallowed fire'. Again, Seneca makes Oedipus offer to exceed tradition by proposing that he take into his

mouth, not mere burning coals or ordinary flames, but the fiery balls rolling down from Etna. Cf. [Tib.] 4.1.196 *[pro te . . . ausim] uel paruum Aetnaeae corpus committere flammae*, where the author's homage to Messalla is being expressed.

314–15 Siculo uomit I.e. Etna, whose volcanic activity attracted much attention from ancient writers (see Sir William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* (London, 1878), 1.61–2). For other references to Etna or its fires in Senecan drama, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 106; *Med.* 410; *Phaedr.* 156, 190; *Thyest.* 583.

315 igneos uoluens globos *S* emends *soluens* found in *E* and *A* to *uoluens*. Both *soluens* and *uoluens* make sense, but *uoluens* is probably correct: it is rhetorically more effective and is attested also, as Zwierlein (OCT) notes, at Verg. *Georg.* 1.472–3 *uidimus . . . Aetnam,/ flammarumque globos liquifactaque uoluere saxa*, by which Seneca seems to have been influenced here. The corruption of *u* to *s* could have occurred under the influence of the *s* of *igneos*.

316–17 serpenti . . . / quae saeua furto nemoris Herculeo furit The reference is to the dragon which guarded the apples of the Hesperides. In most versions of this labour of Hercules, Hercules obtains the apples by killing the dragon (so A.R. 4.1396–1405; E. *HF.* 398–9; Lucr. 5.37; Hyg. *Fab.* 30; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 18), but at Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 530–2, the dragon seems to be merely drugged (see Fitch *ad loc.*), and at Sen. *Agam.* 855–8, the dragon simply does not see Hercules until it is too late. Seneca could have had either of these versions in mind here.

317 nemoris Miller translates as '[the dragon still savagely raging] *in* the grove', but the sense must surely be '[the dragon, which savagely rages at the theft of Hercules] *from* the grove'. Cf. Sen. *Med.* 821–2 [*Prometheus*] *caeli/ qui furta luit uiscera feto.* This use of the genitive, indicating 'place from which' with *furtum*, appears to occur only in these two instances (*TLL* 6.1646.26–8), and the Greek equivalent, κλοπή, does not seem to be used in this way. Perhaps Seneca was influenced by the 'Greek' genitive of separation, found, *inter alia*, with verbs of 'freeing from', 'restraining from' (cf., e.g., Plaut. *Rud.* 247 *ut me omnium iam laborum leuas*; Hor. *Od.* 2.9.17 *desine mollium tandem querallarum*, with NH *ad loc.*; further examples in LHS 2.81–3).

318 iubente te praebebit alitibus iecur I.e. like Prometheus. The progression of Seneca's thought from Hercules to Prometheus is

explicable in mythological terms, since Hercules is said, in some versions of the legend, to have killed the eagle which preyed on Prometheus' liver, on his way to fetch the golden apples (Hes. *Theog.* 521–31; Apollod. 2.5.11; Hyg. *Fab.* 54, 144).

319 iubente te uel uiuet The key-word is *uel* (= 'even'; *OLD uel* 5a), by which Oedipus implies that for him to carry on living is more difficult than to perform any of the exploits which he has listed (313–18); cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1316–17 *eat ad labores hic quoque Herculeos labor:/ uiuamus* and, with reference to Seneca's own capitulation, Sen. *Ep.* 78.2 *itaque imperaui mihi ut uiuerem; aliquando enim et uiuere fortiter facere est* (see also 77–9).

The unexpected or paradoxical climax is a feature of Senecan dramatic technique: cf. *Herc. Fur.* 1260–1, *Med.* 19–20, *Thyest.* 290–3, where Tarrant observes: 'It is characteristic of such twists that the pointed conclusion is verbally plainer than the phrases which precede it'. One may compare also Catull. 11, where Catullus, after acknowledging the readiness of Furius and Aurelius to travel with him to the most barbarous and dangerous parts of the world, asks them only to take a message of hatred to Lesbia. The implication, as here, is that the comparative lack of effort demanded by the climax to the catalogue of dangerous exploits is nevertheless more difficult for Catullus to supply because of his personal circumstances.

The half-line, as Tarrant ((1978), 229 n.86) points out, cannot be taken as an indication that the play is incomplete, since metrically incomplete lines occur also at *Thyest.* 100, *Phaedr.* 605, and *Troad.* 1103, and none of these dramas seems to be unfinished. Modern editors have tended to delete *Thyest.* 100 and *Phaedr.* 605, but see Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 199 on *Phaedr.* 605). On the half-line in *Troad.* Fantham comments that it is 'broken off, as the ritual is broken off, by the child's sudden leap to claim his inheritance', the implication being that the incomplete verse has a deliberate artistic purpose. Certainly, both *Troad.* 1103 and *Phoen.* 319 are effective as they stand, but it is dangerous to apply modern notions of poetic technique to the works of ancient authors. Seneca not infrequently allows the climax of an idea or theme to end in the middle of a line (so, e.g., *Herc. Fur.* 1143; *Troad.* 476; *Med.* 25; *Agam.* 552; *Thyest.* 330), but the fact that the line is complete does not detract from the effectiveness of the device. Hence, the effectiveness of a half-line is no guarantee that Seneca intended to leave the line unfinished. There appears to be no reason to believe that Vergil would not have removed the anomaly

of the unfinished lines in the *Aeneid*, had he lived to complete his revision of the poem; for a sane discussion, see Camps, 128–31, who points out that the idea of using an incomplete line as an artistic device is not recorded as having occurred to anyone in the ancient world. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of imitation of the Vergilian half-line in later hexameter verse. There seems, thus, to be no reason to believe that Seneca would not have removed or completed the unfinished verses in his plays had he been concerned to polish his dramas, which give evidence in other respects of having been composed with careless speed (e.g. clumsy versification, excessive use of stock descriptions, unoriginal and repetitive choral lyrics).

ACT 2 (320–62)

320–62 *E* takes 320–62 as a continuation of the first act (1–319) and gives 320–7 and 347–9 to Antigone. *A* begins a new act at 320, assigning 320–7 to a Nuntius and 347–9 to Antigone. That 320 begins a new act must be correct: as Friedrich, 128, observes, 306–19 constitutes an 'ausgesprochenes Schlussstück' (see further Intro., 2 n.9).

More contentious is the allocation of 320–7 and 347–9. Leo gives 320–7 to Antigone, suggesting that at least one verse is missing before 320 which might have been something like *parumper aures commoda: te iam pater* (*Obs. Crit.*, 80). Friedrich, 128, claims that *frater* (324), which refers to Polyneices, could only be spoken by a sister. Mueller ((1901), 263–4), on the other hand, argued that 320–7 are spoken by a Nuntius: 1) *regia stirpe editum* is more suitable coming from a messenger to a king than from a daughter to a father (Zwierlein (1978), 146, compares *Regina* of the Satelles in 387 and Sen. *Oedip.* 784–5), 2) *frater* (324) need not indicate that Antigone is speaking, since the image of the brothers is derived from *arma fraterna* (321). One may note, in addition, that in 401 the Satelles refers to the brothers as *fratres*; there is no reason, therefore, why the Nuntius should not do so here. Mesk, 293, observed, moreover, that the tone of the entire scene is impersonal and official, and unlike a conversation between a father and a daughter who share a deep affection.

With regard to 347–9, there are reasons for doubting that these verses have been correctly ascribed by the MSS to Antigone. Mueller, *ibid.*, argued that if Antigone were speaking, she would not say *liberis* (349), but *natis* or *fratribus*. He noted also that Antigone does not, as

one might expect, address Oedipus as 'father' in 347, and that in 350 Oedipus does not refer to himself as a father but simply as a *senex*. The fact that *liberis* is used of the brothers is not a cogent argument against Antigone's being the speaker, since conversely, as has been observed, in 401 the Satelles refers to the brothers as *fratribus*. Nor is the fact that Antigone does not call Oedipus 'father' and that Oedipus refers to himself as a *senex* conclusive, although it is strange that, in a play in which family terms are used so frequently and so tellingly, Seneca should have missed an opportunity here. This is particularly so since, as Zwierlein ((1978), 147) points out, when Antigone urges her mother to action in 403–6 and 414–18, she addresses her once as *parens* (403) and twice as *mater* (405, 416). The phrase, *publica . . . mala* (348), is perhaps more convincing from a Theban official than from Antigone (so Zwierlein (1978), 148), although Antigone *has* previously shown concern for the Theban people as a whole. More compelling is Zwierlein's argument (*ibid.*) that when Oedipus in 350–4 says: *Vides modestae deditum menti senem* . . . , he seems to be presenting his emotional state to someone for the first time. This would have to be the Nuntius, since Antigone already knows about his *ira*. See also on 349.

This act is the shortest in Senecan drama (see Intro., 2), but is extremely powerful for all its brevity. In it the full force of Oedipus' *furor*, which Seneca has portrayed as abating at the end of the previous act, breaks out once more, directed this time primarily at Eteocles and Polyneices. Structurally, this act forms the link between the 'Oedipus-part' of the play and the 'Jocasta-part': in it, the theme of the fraternal conflict, which, in the 'Oedipus-part', is subordinated to the theme of Oedipus' *libido moriendi*, emerges strongly in anticipation of its dominance in the 'Jocasta-part', and the appearance of Jocasta herself is prepared for by the reference to her in 358, where she is closely associated with the brothers' battle (see further Intro., 7 and on *manus* 329).

On the location of this act, see Intro., 2 n.12.

320 exemplum in ingens regia stirpe editum This verse is problematic. *E* reads *exemplum ingens regia stirpe editum*, while *A* omits *exemplum ingens* and reads *regia stirpe edite*. Lipsius corrected a simple case of haplography by restoring *in* to the reading of E. *Edite* cannot be correct, and the omission of part of the verse by *A* seems to indicate a desire to dispose of the half-line in 319 by completing it (with a careless disregard for the metre) with the second half of 320. Leo pointed out (*Obs. Crit.*, 80) that it is not immediately obvious to whom

regia stirpe editum refers, and suggested that at least one verse is missing before 320. This is probably correct, since the pronoun *te*, perhaps with *Oedipoda*, seems to be called for here. There is no reason to suppose, however, that what is missing is the two-and-a-half feet needed to complete 319. Seneca not infrequently ends a major speech with a metrically incomplete verse, leaving the next speaker to complete the line (so, e.g., *Oedip.* 81, *Phaedr.* 177, *Thyest.* 204), but 319, as the final verse not merely of a speech, but of the whole act, could hardly be left to be completed in a new act, particularly if one supposes Seneca to have intended there to be a choral ode between the two acts (see Intro., 10).

exemplum in ingens The Nuntius diplomatically draws a veil over Oedipus' unhappy recent history and refers only to his glorious past, in which he appeared as an *exemplum* of courage and intelligence by facing the dreaded Sphinx and solving her riddle (cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 92–102).

In here expresses purpose (='so as to be'): cf. Sen. *Ep.* 66.4 *Claranus mihi uidetur in exemplar editus*, *Prou.* 6.3 *nati sunt in examplar*, *Ira* 2.16.1 *Errat qui ea in exemplum hominis adducit*, 3.19.1 *animaduersiones quo notiores sunt plus in exemplum emendationemque proficiant* (see further *TLL* 7.768.9–35).

321–2 Thebae pauentes arma fraterna inuocant/ rogantque tectis arceas patriis The Thebans clearly consider Oedipus to have some influence over his sons (cf. 553–5, where Jocasta holds up Oedipus as an example to Polyneices). This bears out Oedipus' assertion that he gave up the throne willingly (105) and suggests that he continued to live in Thebes as a respected citizen (cf. E. *Ph.* 63–8) until the horror of the conflict between the brothers drove him into voluntary exile.

Patrius = 'of your city/ country' (cf., e.g., Stat. *Theb.* 11.277 *hos pelago patrius iam detulit amnis*; Tac. *Ann.* 15.29 *eques compositus per turmas et insignibus patriis*; *OLD patrius* 4a) rather than 'ancestral': Oedipus is urged to save from destruction the entire city and not merely the royal palace.

323 non sunt minae This must be understood in the context of 322. The Nuntius is telling Oedipus that what he has just said about Thebes being set alight by enemy torches is not an exaggeration of the seriousness of the situation – the war is no longer a mere threat, it is a reality. Cf. Antigone's words at 290–1 *tu impii belli minas/ auertere . . . potes*. *Tantum* must be understood here, as not infrequently

in Latin: cf. 451, where the idea of 'only' attaches to *error*; also Lucr. 3.144, 351, 589 (with Kenney *ad locc.*); Ov. *Am.* 3.10.45–6; Sen. *Phaedr.* 463. For *tantum* understood in Seneca's prose works, see Bertil Axelson, *Senecastudien: Kritische Bemerkungen zu Senecas Naturales Quaestiones* (Lund, 1933), 62–3; Hine on Sen. *QN.* 2.11.1.

malum *Malum* embraces both the normal evil of war and the impiety of two brothers who are about to join battle against each other.

325 in bella cunctos Graeciae populos agit The more imminent the war becomes, the more vast is said to be the extent of the enemy forces: in 58, Polyneices is described as *cateruas . . . Argolicas agens*; by 283–4, when Oedipus prophesies the destruction of Thebes, these have become *urbes . . . Graias*; now, when the danger of war is immediate, the enemy comprises *cunctos Graeciae populos.*

326 septena muros castra Thebanos premunt. Seneca, like Sophocles (*OC.* 1305–25), does not explain why there were seven bands; Aeschylus (*Th.* 377ff.) and Euripides (*Ph.* 1092–3) assign each of the seven bands to one of the seven gates of Thebes. Each of the Greek tragedians gives a list of the names (which vary slightly from playwright to playwright) of the leaders of the seven companies. This Seneca, despite his fondness for catalogues, does not do, either here or at 391ff. This may be because, in the Senecan version of the fraternal conflict, the outbreak of war is more imminent than it is in any of the versions of the Greek tragedians – by the time Jocasta tries to reconcile the brothers, the two armies are on the point of joining battle – and Seneca realised that the inclusion of a lengthy catalogue in a situation of dramatic urgency might dissipate, rather than heighten (as it does in E. *Ph.*), the dramatic suspense.

septena The distributive rather than the cardinal number is regularly used with words which occur only in the plural (see KS 1.121; LHS 2.212); cf. 391 *septena reges bella dispositi*, where *septena* is used *metri gratia* for *septem.*

327 et bellum et scelus *Scelus*, the reading of *E*, is to be preferred to *nefas* of *A* because of *scelera* in the following verse: the technique whereby a character begins a speech by picking up a key-word at the end of the previous speech is much favoured by Seneca (cf., e.g., *Phoen.* 215–16, 349–51, 477–8).

328–32 Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 398 observes that learning from

personal experiences or from others often forms the basis of a rhetorical point in Senecan drama; he cites as examples, in addition to this instance, *Herc. Fur.* 69–70, 491; *Troad.* 242, 264, 730; *Phaedr.* 1200; *Agam.* 932.

328–35 Ego sum (328) . . . ego sum? meorum (331) . . . me (332) . . . meas (335) See on 216.

329 sanguine a caro Miller translates well as 'from the blood of loved ones'. Hirschberg *ad loc.* compares Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 745 *sanguine humano abstine* and *Ep.* 114.7 *pepercit gladio, sanguine abstinuit.*

manus For *manus* as an important word motif in *Phoen.*, see on *manum* 52. *Manus* here is associated both with the violence of Oedipus against his father (a prominent theme in 1–319) and with the violence of his sons (which dominates the second fragment), suggesting the transitional nature of this act (on this, see Paul, 58), in which the focus of attention begins to shift from Oedipus to the actions of the brothers.

331 meorum facinorum exempla appetunt *A* reads *meorum exempla facinorum*, which gives an iambic fifth foot. Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 123) further notes, in support of *meorum facinorum* (*E*), that the phrase occurs in the same position in the verse also in Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1183 and *Med.* 561.

For *appeto* used in the sense of 'follow/imitate (an example)', cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 916 *prisca et antiqua appetens.* Romans traditionally revered and attempted to emulate the virtues of their ancestors (cf., e.g., Cic. *Off.* 3.47; Verg. *Aen.* 12.439–40; Sen. *Phoen.* 553–5); Seneca sometimes inverts this attitude, with characters looking to their ancestors to provide familial examples of criminal behaviour: cf. *Phaedr.* 240–2; *Thyest.* 242–3.

332 laudo et agnosco libens Cf. [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 954–5 *nunc ueram tui/ agnosce prolem.*

333 dignum Senecan characters, whose state of extreme guilt and anguish tends to express itself in a perverse revelling in their crimes, frequently use *dignus* of themselves or their actions: cf., e.g., *Oedip.* 879, *Troad.* 863, *Agam.* 34, *Thyest.* 271. Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 34 suggests that this may be a deliberate reversal of the concern to behave correctly as one's *dignitas* demands. He notes that *dignus* is used sarcastically also in other authors, though not by individuals of themselves, and that equivalent words are used in this way in Greek too (cf. Cic. *Verr.* 4.37; S. *El.* 1487–8).

334 agite, o propago clara Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 123) observes that the reading of *A*, *clara*, is supported by 334–6 *generosam indolem . . . superate* and by 339 *tanta nobilitas*; *E*'s *cara* may result from *caro* (229).

For the collective singular with a plural verb, cf., e.g., Lucr. 4.997–8 *catulorum blanda propago/ . . . instant*; Plin. *HN.* 7.62 *aliorum eius liberum propago Liciniani sunt cognominati* (see KS 1.22–4 for further examples).

334–5 generosam indolem/ probate factis Seneca ironically inverts the traditional concern to act correctly in all things in accordance with one's noble origins (expressed, e.g., at Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1239, *Oedip.* 82–5): the origins of Eteocles and Polyneices are noble, but so tainted with impiety that to act as befits them is to plunge into crime. Cf. 339.

335–6 gloriam ac laudes meas/ superate Oedipus refers not to the genuine acclaim which he won when he saved Thebes from the Sphinx, but sarcastically (as 352–8 make clear) to the horror which the discovery of his crimes evoked. Contrast the speech of the Nuntius (320–1), where Oedipus' crimes are passed over and only his early greatness and heroism are recalled. On family rivalry in crime in Senecan drama, see on 298, 305–6, and Tarrant on *Agam.* 26f. Gordon Braden ('The Rhetoric and Psychology of Power in the Dramas of Seneca' *Arion* 9 (1970), 5–41 at 22–3) suggests that the compulsion to perform deeds greater than those accomplished in the past is 'an important psychological component of a heroic culture'. The topos is variously used: at *Phaedr.* 142–4, the Nurse urges Phaedra not to outsin her mother, and at 687–97, Hippolytus accuses her of having done so; at *Agam.* 124 and *Thyest.* 193–6, Clytemnaestra and Atreus spur themselves on to their respective crimes by desiring to outdo their siblings in wickedness. The instance here is the most daring use of the motif, where a father's guilt manifests itself in a masochistic delight in his crimes and in a desire for his offspring to outdo him in sinning. There is some acute psychology in the portrayal of the twisting of a mind over-burdened with unresolved guilt.

336–7 et aliquid facite propter quod patrem/ adhuc iuuet uixisse Cf. 305–6 *morique propero, dum in domo nemo est mea/ nocentior me*: from wanting to die before his sons commit crimes to rival his, Oedipus now perversely wants his sons to perpetrate some evil which will make him glad to have lived up to now. *Adhuc . . . uixisse* seems to refer to Oedipus' capitulation in 319. *Propter* is prosaic and does not occur elsewhere in Senecan tragedy (see Axelson, *Unpoetische Wörter*, 79).

337 sic estis orti *Sic* alludes to the incestuous nature of the union of which Eteocles and Polyneices were born: Oedipus says that the offspring of such impious parents cannot but themselves be impious. The criminal tendencies are ascribed entirely to heredity and there is no mention of the traditional curse on the Theban royal house (see also on 297). Cf. Sen. *Phaedr.*, where the question is raised between Phaedra and the Nurse: Phaedra attributes her impious passion *both* to a family tendency (113 *fatale miserae matris agnosco malum*) *and* to Venus' hatred of the Sun's descendants (124–8); the Nurse rejects both notions, saying that love is not a god (195–203) and that, whereas Pasiphaë's unnatural passion could be ascribed to fate, Phaedra's lust is a crime to be attributed to a flaw in her character (143–4).

339 tanta nobilitas See on 334–5.

340–7 None of the deeds which Oedipus lists could objectively be described as a *scelus . . . haut usitatum* (see 338–9), since they are all part of the usual destruction of war. What makes each of them an unusual crime, however, is the fact that they are not to be carried out by a foreign enemy, but by a native Theban and his brother against their own city (Oedipus attributes the destruction of Thebes to both his sons). Cf. 565–82, where Jocasta begs Polyneices not to do just what Oedipus here urges his sons to accomplish.

Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 100–12 for the series of plural imperatives; Fitch *ad loc.* notes also Pacuv. 350–2 R^2 *Agite ite, euoluite rapite, coma/ tractate per aspera saxa et humum,/ scindite uestem ocius!*

340 penetrales deos = *Penates*, see Cic. *ND.* 2.68 *di Penates . . . penetrales a poetis uocantur* (A.S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1958) *ad loc.* gives further parallels: Tac. *Ann.* 2.10; Arn. 3.40; Isid. *Etym.* 8.11.99; Non. p. 72 (ed. Wallace M. Lindsay, *Nonii Marcelli De Conpendiosa Doctrina Libros XX*, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1903); Sen. *Oedip.* 264–5 *iuro . . / . perque penetrales deos.* The *penates* here, like the *lares* mentioned in 344, are to be understood concretely as statues.

341 frugemque flamma metite The metaphor whereby the destruction of crops is described as a harvest by flame is uniquely Senecan; contrast 563 *quae meti gladio iubes.*

343 disicite passim moenia See Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 123 and Hirschberg *ad loc.* for parallels to this use of *disicio.*

in planum date = 'level to the ground'; cf. Luc. 1.383 *in*

planum effundere muros. For *in planum* used figuratively, cf. Sen. *Agam.* 83–6:

Erinys,
nimias semper comitata domos,
quas in planum quaelibet hora
tulit ex alto.

344 templis deos obruite The idea seems to be derived from Ovid *Fast.* 6.437–8 *quo tempore Vesta/ arsit et est tectis obruta paene suis.*

344–5 maculatos lares/ conflate See on *penetrales deos* 340. Tarrant on Sen. *Thyest.* 264 observes that Seneca frequently uses *lar* for *domus* (fourteen times), but that *lares*, in the specifically Roman sense of 'household gods', occurs in only a few passages: in addition to this instance and *Thyest.* 264, cf. also *Herc. Fur.* 917 and *Agam.* 392.

Juvenal (13.153) condemns the morals of his day for being such that even the melting down of whole statues of Jupiter is an everday occurrence. This is obviously an exaggeration, but the melting down of images by robbers and foreign invaders is not infrequently attested: cf., e.g., Sen. *Const. Sap.* 4.2; Lucian *Iupp. Conf.* 8. At Suet. *Nero* 32.4, the emperor himself is accused of melting down statues made of gold and silver.

346 concremetur Apart from this instance, *concremo* appears to occur in poetry only in Sen. *Phaedr.* 1215–16 *funebres una face/ ut concremarem prolis ac thalami rogos* (*TLL* 4.92.77–8). Billerbeck, 73, notes that in both instances the verb form is -u-- (it could, of course, be -u-u before a vowel) and follows a monosyllable at the beginning of the verse, as is usual with metrically equivalent compounds formed with *con-*. The only uncomplicated position, in fact, for such a word *is* following an initial monosyllable. -u-u or ---u, but not --u-, can follow the first syllable of the second foot, giving a fourth foot caesura (e.g. *Phoen.* 512), but this is rare (see Drexler, *röm. Metr.*, 136, whose list of examples from *Phoen.* is not, however, exhaustive). -u-u is improbable after the initial syllable of the third foot because of Seneca's avoidance of an iambic fifth foot (see Drexler, *ibid.*, 137; Costa on Sen. *Med.* 512); even when it scans -u--, it is unlikely after the first syllable of the third foot since a cretic final word usually only occurs with elision, as, e.g., in *Phoen.* 347 *uiolentum impetum.*

346–7 primus a thalamis meis/ incipiat ignis For *incipio ab*, cf. *Phoen.* 410–11 *qui non est pius/ incipiat a me* and see *OLD incipio* 3. Oedipus' desire for his own bed-chamber to burn first suggests his

obsessive conviction that the criminal tendencies of his sons exist because they were born of an impious union (see also on 337).

347–9 The verses (347 *Mitte*-49) should be allocated, like 320–7, to the Nuntius; see on 320–62 and 349.

347–8 Mitte uiolentum impetum/ doloris Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 975 observes that *impetus* is part of the 'somewhat formulaic language' used by Senecan characters who urge the restraint of passion; he compares *Med.* 381 *resiste et iras comprime ac retine impetum*; *Phaedr.* 255 *Moderare . . . mentis effrenae impetus*; *Agam.* 126–7 *quidue consilii impotens/ tumido feroces impetus animo geris?*, 203 *Regina, frena temet et siste impetus. Impetus* (= ὁρμή, see J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 225) is used by the Stoics with reference to the emotions.

349 auctorque placidae liberis pacis ueni Miller's translation, 'go to thy sons as the adviser of calm peace', is unsatisfactory. Firstly, although *auctor pacis* can have the sense of 'adviser of peace' (so, e.g., Liv. 44.16.5 *Is pacis semper auctor regi fuerat*), it means more than that here: Oedipus is regarded as the 'bringer', the 'source' of peace, and not merely as its proponent (cf. Ov. *Pont.* 1.1.32 *proderit auctorem pacis habere nihil*; Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 250–1 *sensere terrae pacis auctorem suae/ abesse terris*). *Liberis* must be taken not with *ueni*, but with *placidae . . . pacis* (for the combination, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.249 *nunc placida compostus pace quiescit*) as a dative of advantage, '[. . . as the bringer] of calm peace to your sons'. Secondly, *ueni* = 'come' not 'go'. The use of *ueni* without an amplifying *mecum*, may lend support to the argument that 347–9 are spoken by the Nuntius and not by Antigone: the former, who has just arrived from Thebes and is expected to return there, might well say simply *ueni*, but Antigone, who has been with her father on Cithaeron, would surely urge him either to go, *i*, to Thebes (alone) or to come *mecum*, since 'come' implies that the addressee will be accompanied by the speaker, which cannot be inferred as easily in Antigone's case as in that of the Nuntius.

350 modestae deditum menti senem For *senem*, see on *senex* 32. For *modestus* (= 'temperate', 'restrained') used with reference to a part of a human being, cf. Cic. *Fam.* 15.20.1 *modestus eius uultus*; *Priap.* 15.1 *non satis modestas quicumque fur attulerit manus agello*; Sen. *Ira* 3.6.1 *sublimis animus . . . modestus* (*TLL* 8.1224.77–84).

351 placidaeque amantem pacis ad partes Oedipus echoes the *placidae . . . pacis* of the Nuntius in 349 (for this technique, see on

327). *Pacis*, as the word order suggests, is to be taken with both *amantem* and *ad partes*. *Ad partes* is used metaphorically, *pax* being personified as a contender in a dispute. The plural *partes* is frequently found when only a single faction is being referred to (see *OLD pars* 16a–d). The phrase *placidae amantem pacis*, rare in poetry, may be an echo of Ov. *Am.* 2.6.26 *placidae pacis amator* (so Jakobi, *Einfluss*, 43).

352 tumet animus ira Tarrant on Sen. *Thyest.* 180 observes that open acknowledgement of one's *ira* is characteristically Senecan, and cites as examples *Med.* 135–6, *Oedip.* 519, *Agam.* 970. On Oedipus' *ira* in *Phoen.*, see on 163. For *tumeo* used of *ira*, cf. Sen. *Ira* 1.20.1 *Ne illud quidem iudicandum est, aliquid iram ad magnitudinem animi conferre. Non est enim illa magnitudo: tumor est.*

feruet immensum dolor *Immensum* of *A* (*E* reads *immensus*) is an adverbial accusative; cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 981 *saeuit horrendum* and see LHS 2.40, KS 1.280–9. The image of the fire of passion is, not surprisingly, the most common image in the tragedies, since passion and conflict are central to all the dramas. On the philosophical significance, see Armisen-Marchetti, *Sapientiae Facies*, 352–4.

353 casus et iuuenum furor Hendiadys for *fortuitus furor.* The combination of *casus* and *iuuenum* reduces the wickedness of the brothers almost to the level of excessive youthful high spirits.

354–5 adhuc/ ciuile bellum *Adhuc* (= 'so far', 'as yet') modifies *ciuile*; Miller translates well as '. . . war that as yet is between citizens'. The war is simply a *ciuile bellum* since there has as yet been no suggestion that the brothers will meet in direct conflict.

355 frater in fratrem ruat This is the clause which is described as the curse of Oedipus upon his sons by almost all commentators, who are unduly influenced by the treatment of the legend in Greek drama, in which such a curse appears and is clearly identified in every case by the word ἀρά or ἀραί (cf. A. *Th.* 656, 695, 709, 833–4, 886–7, 940–4; S. *OC.* 1372–6; E. *Ph.* 67–8, 624, 876–7, 1555–8). Here, there is no mention of an *imprecatio* or a *maledictum*, and Oedipus' 'curse' is no more than an exhortation for his sons to commit what is, in his eyes, the most impious crime imaginable (cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 1110–11 *Vindices aderunt dei;/ his puniendum uota te tradunt mea*, which is Seneca's restrained version of the traditional curse on Atreus by Thyestes, and see Tarrant *ad loc.* for a discussion of the implications of the Senecan treatment).

This exhortation cannot be seen in isolation, since it, together with *date arma matri* (358), forms the climax of the catalogue of crimes which Oedipus urges his sons to commit. It is, indeed, the climax of the destructive fury which has raged in Oedipus since the beginning of the play and which now is extended to include his sons (see Friedrich, 129–30). Opelt, 278–9, sees the whole catalogue of crimes as encompassing a triple curse – against Thebes, the brothers, and Jocasta. This is not convincing, because there is no mention of a curse or curses, and the tone of mingled self-hatred and destructive glee is not that of a curse. (The use of a jussive subjunctive, *ruat*, rather than an imperative (as in 358), is not significant, since Seneca uses it also in 345–7, probably for the sake of variety.)

Although *frater in fratrem ruat* is similar in content to the curse of Oedipus found in Greek drama (in E. *Ph.*, likewise, the mutual slaughter of the brothers is implied rather than directly mentioned), it is simply the conclusion of Oedipus' twisted desire for his sons to act in accordance with their impious birth (334–5, 338). Oedipus' curse in Greek tragedy forms part of the general curse on the house of Thebes and is an external, supernatural force. Seneca transforms both the general curse on the house and the specific curse of Oedipus into a genetic phenomenon, a hereditary compulsion for evil (see also on 337), which manifests itself in each generation.

357 de more nostro Leo (*Obs. Crit.*, 220–1) points out that this phrase is unusual in poetry in that the preposition precedes the epithet: one would expect *nostro de more* as, e.g., at Verg. *Aen.* 7.357 *solito . . . de more*; Ov. *Met.* 12.11 *patrio de more*; Sil. 8.671 *nostro de more*; contrast, however, Verg. *Aen.* 11.142 *de more uetusto*, where, as here, the metre does not permit the epithet to precede *de*.

358 date arma matri Gronovius emended *patri* of the MSS (following the cod. Orat.) to *matri* on the grounds that *date arma patri* makes no sense, since there would be no crime left for Oedipus to perform after the mutual murder of the brothers and no-one left to arm him. Leo, who like all modern editors accepts Gronovius' emendation, argues more cogently that Oedipus' desire for a crime *quod meos deceat toros* (357) must involve his mother, and that he would hardly demand to be armed himself in view of what he says immediately afterwards – *nemo me ex his eruat/ siluis* (358–9) (*Obs. Crit.*, 221). For MS confusion between *mater* and *pater*, cf. Liv. 1.56.11, Sen. *Contr.* 1.7.8.

What is implied by *date arma matri* is not clear, since the inference (drawn from the most obvious interpretation of *arma dare*) that the brothers are to arm Jocasta for combat in the coming battle, while suitably bizarre, does not accord with Oedipus' desire for a crime in his own style, *quod meos deceat toros* (357). Gronovius interpreted it as a reference to Jocasta's suicide, which is reasonable in that, in E. *Ph.*, Jocasta kills herself with a sword. However, since her suicide is traditionally motivated by the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, it makes little sense for Oedipus here to urge the brothers to give weapons to Jocasta so that she can kill herself before she has reason to do so. Moreover, providing Jocasta with a suicide weapon would again not seem to be a *nefas/ de more nostro, quod meos deceat toros* (356–7).

Date arma matri must imply not only something more dreadful than *frater in fratrem ruat* (355), of which Oedipus says: *nec hoc sat est* (356), but also something appropriate to Oedipus' crimes and to his incest in particular. Opelt, 95, suggests plausibly that what is referred to here is the sons' murder of their mother, which would certainly be a crime in the mould of Oedipus' *scelera*. *Date arma matri* must then mean 'inflict violence upon your mother' (for this sense of *do* with the dative, see *OLD do* 24a). Fantham's suggestion ((1983), 65) that *date arma matri* refers to an incestuous assault by the sons on their mother, parallel to the notion of Oedipus' raping Antigone (49–50), is appealing, although the sexual overtone must be secondary. The metaphorical use of *arma* to refer to the penis is well attested (cf. Verg. *Cat.* 3.15; Ov. *Am.* 1.9.26; Petr. *Sat.* 130.6; Mart. 6.73.6; Priap. 31.3), and although no parallel exists for *arma dare* denoting sexual violence, Fantham points to Sen. *Agam.* 32 *per omnis liberos irem parens*, where the use of *ire per* is only found elsewhere at Mart. 1.46.3 and Priap. 74.1, and the allusion to incest is similarly strained.

359–62 Scenes in Roman comedy not infrequently end with a character's stepping aside to overhear what takes place in the following scene, and these verses may give evidence of the influence of comedy on Senecan (and possibly Republican) tragedy (so Friedrich, 132–3). *Aucupor* commonly introduces comic scenes of eavesdropping (cf., e.g., Plaut. *Asin.* 881 *aucupemus ex insidiis clanculum quam rem gerant*, *Mil.* 993 *Tace, subauscultemus ecquid de me fiat mentio*, but, as Tarrant ((1978), 250 n.155) observes, the context here is very different to that found in comedy. He points out that *aucupor* occurs in the sense found here also in Republican tragedy (he cites Enn. *Sc.* 218 (R^2) and in later writers (e.g. Cic. *Pis.* 57 *ut leuitatis est inanem aucupari rumorem*; Ov.

Her. 9.41 *aucupor infelix incertae murmura famae*), and suggests that these verses of *Phoen.* may have been influenced more by Ovid than by Plautus. It is not impossible, however, that the comic technique found its way, in a modified form, into Republican, and perhaps Augustan, tragedy, and from there into Seneca.

Lines 359–62 not only conclude this act neatly, but also provide a transition to the next act (and second fragment) – Oedipus is disposed of, opening the way for the appearance of Jocasta in the role of mediator. This tidy transition, as Friedrich, 133, observes, is a point in favour of the unity of the play (for a full discussion, see Intro., 3ff.). It is also an indication that, apart from the verse, or couple of verses, that may be lacking before 320 (see on 320), the act, short as it is, is complete as it stands.

359 latebo rupis exesae cauo Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 460 *non latuit infans rupis exesae specu.* On the expression, see Hillen, 24–5.

360 saepe A *saepes* is a protective barrier or covering of some kind; in this context, it is probably best translated as 'undergrowth'. Hirschberg *ad loc.* notes the prosaic nature of the phrase *saepes densa.*

362 quod possum *Quod* is used in a restrictive sense, = 'as far as'; for the expression, cf. Ter. *Heaut.* 416 *quod potero adiutabo senem*; Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6 *cura, quod potes, ut ualeas.*

saeua . . . bella . . . audiam = 'I shall hear *of* the fierce war' (cf. 361 *aucupabor uerba rumoris*) rather than 'I shall hear the fierce war' (see *OLD audio* 8a; *TLL* 2.1271.73–1274.9).

Act 3 (363–442)

A has no change of scene at this point. *E* begins a new act headed by the names: Jocasta, Satelles, Polyneices, Eteocles. *E* omits Antigone's name from the list of *dramatis personae* and the verses which *A* gives to Antigone (403–6, 414–18) *E* leaves unallocated. As Leo has pointed out (*Obs. Crit.*, 82–3), Antigone's name must be added to *E*'s list of characters: 403–6 and 414–18 clearly belong to her, as *parens* (403) and *mater* (406, 416) indicate. It seems also that the names of Polyneices and Eteocles should be deleted here, since they play no part in this act, and added before 443, where another change of scene occurs (see *ad loc.*).

There must, of course, be a change of setting at 363. The new act

should probably be imagined as taking place on the battlements of the royal palace in Thebes, since the setting is clearly one which affords a good view of the battlefield (see Intro., 39–40); cf. the τειχοσκοπία in E. *Ph.* 101–201, where, however, the location of the scene is explicitly stated (88–91) and the basis for the ability of the paidagogos to see offstage is established.

There is little justification for Farnaby's statement: *Multa desunt in fine praecedentis Actus. Deest etiam huius Actus tertii principium.* Both acts are exceptionally short, but the transition from one to another is smoothly achieved (see on 359–62) and there is no indication of a large lacuna in the text.

The first half of *Phoen.* (1–362) features Oedipus, with Antigone and the Nuntius (see on 320–62 on the allocation of 320–7 and 347–9) as his foils; in the second part of the play (363–664), Jocasta is the main character, with the Satelles, Antigone, Polyneices, and Eteocles playing secondary roles. This arrangement makes it clear that Seneca's main concern was not to write a drama about the battle of the seven against Thebes, but to use the legendary material in a new way – as the background for an examination of the reactions of the parents to their sons' strife. Hence the parallelism between the two halves of the play (see further Intro., 3ff.). This parallelism is reinforced here with the opening of the second part by a lament of Jocasta (363–86), which balances the emotional speech of Oedipus (1–50) with which the play begins.

The exclamation, *felix Agaue,* instantly establishes Jocasta's misery, since any woman who could describe as 'fortunate' a mother who unknowingly dismembered her own son must be truly wretched. The reference to the crime of Agaue creates a link between Jocasta and Oedipus (and, consequently, between the two fragments of the play), since not only do they both mention it in their respective opening speeches (cf. 15–18), but, more strikingly, they both envy the crime: Oedipus wishes that his mother had killed him as Agaue killed her son (25–6), and Jocasta envies Agaue, whose guilt she considers to be light by comparison with her own.

In 377–86, Seneca presents Jocasta's predicament as a mini-*suasoria*: a mother is torn between her two sons, one of whom has been wronged by his brother and is now preparing to commit the impiety of attacking his own city, and the other of whom stands as the defender of his city but is responsible for the violence which threatens it, since he wronged his brother. The attention which Seneca devotes

here to the misery of Jocasta's dilemma points to his principal interest in the conflict of the brothers, namely, the feelings and reactions of their mother.

363–4 facinus gestauit The abstract *facinus* is given a concrete sense by *gestauit*; cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.198 *tu dolor et facinus meum.*

364 spolium Cf. E. *Ba.* 1200–1 σὴν νικηφόρον/... ἄγραν; Ov. *Met.* 4.614–15 (of Medusa's head) *at alter/ uiperei referens spolium memorabile monstrum.* Agaue, in her Bacchic frenzy, thinks that Pentheus is a wild animal (a lion in E. *Ba.*, a boar in Ov. *Met.*), and she describes his slaughter as though it were a hunting victory (so, e.g., Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1150–1 *cur latus laeuum uacat/ spolio leonis?*).

366–7 sed misera non ultra suo/ sceleri occucurrit *A* has *ultra suum/ scelus hoc cucurrit*, *E* has *ultra suo/ sceleri occurrit.* Gronovius added the syllable *-cu-* to *occurrit* in *E*, thereby rendering the version of *E* metrically acceptable. Heinsius followed Gronovius, but emended *ultra* to *ultro*, citing in support of *ultro*: Sen. *Phaedr.* 441–2, *Oedip.* 964, and *Ep.* 13, *inter alia* (*Aduers.*, 55). As Carlsson ('Seneca's Tragedies: Notes and Interpretations' *Class. et Med.* 10 (1949), 39–59 at 45–6) pointed out, however, Heinsius' emendation does not fit well into the context: the point of Jocasta's comparison between herself and Agaue is to stress the differences between them, as the opening words of the speech, *felix Agaue*, reveal. The one thing that Agaue has in common with Jocasta is that she also committed a crime involving her son – *fecit scelus* (366). Having established this, however, Jocasta proceeds to point out how Agaue's situation differs from her own, beginning with the adversative *sed.* Heinsius' emendation is incompatible with the adversative, since it implies similarity rather than contrast: Jocasta, like Agaue, did not commit her crime of her own free will and with full knowledge of what she was doing. The sense of the reading of *E* must be: 'but the unfortunate woman did not subsequently come upon her crime', i.e. Agaue killed Pentheus and therefore did not have to have contact with him after she had committed her crime, whereas Jocasta constantly 'comes upon' her crime (by report or physically) in the form of her husband and sons. The version of *E* is preferable to that of *A*, since *ultra suum/ scelus hoc cucurrit* seems to be a rather tortuous way of saying 'she did not commit any further crime'. In addition, the second *hoc* in 367 is awkward if *A*'s *hoc* is correct and either *hoc* or *suum* of *A* seems redundant.

For the preposition, *ultra*, used with a noun that does not indicate space or time, cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 6.114 *uiris ultra sortemque senectae*;

Hor. *Od.* 3.29.31–2 *si mortalis ultra/ fas trepidat*; Sen. *Agam.* 996 *mortem aliquid ultra est.*

367–9 Jocasta's piling up of personal guilt parallels that of Oedipus at 270–3, and she, like Oedipus (see on 270 *leue est paternum facinus*), dismisses as trivial her first *scelus*. Her perception of her pollution is similar to Oedipus': she considers herself *nocens* although her crimes were committed in ignorance (see on 203–15).

368 feci nocentes Sc. *alios.* The plural is emphatic (see Axelson, *Korruptelenkult*, 17), since Jocasta is referring only to Oedipus, whom she has implicated in her crime.

For the expression, which seems to be influenced by declamation, cf. 451–2 *error inuitos adhuc fecit nocentes*, Sen. *Oedip.* 36 *fecimus caelum nocens*; also Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.4 (ascribed to Arellius Fuscus Senior) *odi domum tot facientem nocentes*, 9.4.10 (ascribed to Porcius Latro) *Pro publica innocentia est non licere hoc quoque tyrannis, ut nos faciant nocentes*, *Suas.* 7.3 (ascribed to Cestius Pius) *fac moriendo Antonium nocentiorem.*

369 peperi nocentes Cf. 338 *sic estis orti*: Jocasta, like Oedipus, sees the wickedness of the brothers as being directly related to their origins, and, like him, she regards as her most heinous crime the involvement of her children in the family *nefas.*

369 derat aerumnis meis Sc. *adhuc.* For *deesse* followed by *ut* and the subjunctive in a subject clause, cf. also Sen. *Phaedr.* 1186–7 *hoc derat nefas,/ ut uindicato sancta fruereris toro*; contrast Sen. *Contr.* 1.7.5 *hoc . . . ad fabulas deerat, ut narraretur aliquis solutus a piratis* (where the *ut*-clause is in apposition to *hoc*). In Sen. *Troad.* 888, *derat* is followed by an infinitive.

370 et hostem amarem Polyneices is a *hostis* since he has declared war on Thebes. The notion that one might love an enemy conflicted with the Greek assumption, which persisted into the Roman period, that one should help one's friends and harm one's enemies (see Mary Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics* (Cambridge, 1989), chap. 2; K.J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford, 1974), 180–4).

370–1 bruma ter posuit niues/ et tertia iam falce decubuit Ceres Seneca employs the conventional poetic device of designating the years by the seasons: cf., e.g., Hor. *Od.* 1.11.4; Sen. *Troad.* 73; Juv. 4.92. Neither Sophocles not Euripides specifies the length of Polyneices' exile as precisely as does Seneca, but three years would

seem to be plausible: one year of voluntary exile while Eteocles was reigning (cf. E. *Ph.* 71–2) and two years during which Polyneices tried to persuade Eteocles to give up the throne, failed, married Adrastus' daughter, and began preparations for war against his brother. If one assumes that Oedipus abdicated as soon as the truth of his identity and his crimes was discovered, three years is also the period that has elapsed since the anagnorisis.

371 et tertia iam falce decubuit Ceres Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.15.12 *cadet incurua falce resecta Ceres.* Billerbeck, 76 para. 162, suggests that Seneca's use of *decumbo* with reference to corn (in earlier authors it is used only of persons lying on beds or cushions) was influenced by the descriptions of gladiators mortally wounded by the spear (cf. *falce*). This use of *decumbo* reinforces the personification of Ceres.

372 ut exul errat natus et patria caret The influence of Ov. *Trist* 4.6.19–20 is discernible here: *ut patria careo, bis frugibus area trita est,/ dissiluit nudo pressa bis uua pede.* Cf. also *Phoen.* 586–7.

374 gener est Adrasti Seneca, like Sophocles, avoids explaining the circumstances of Polyneices' marriage to Adrastus' daughter, but Euripides tells of the oracle given to Adrastus and of how he saw Polyneices and Tydeus as fulfilling it (E. *Ph.* 409–23; so also, in even greater detail, Stat. *Theb.* 1.395–497).

374–5 cuius imperio mare/ quod scindit Isthmos regitur This clause apparently reflects the view, commonly held in antiquity as well as in modern times, that Argos ruled a vast empire in Dark Age Greece. This idea seems to have its origin in Homer (*Il.* 2.108, 559–68; see Thomas Kelly, *A History of Argos to 500 BC* (Minnesota, 1976), 38ff.), although our chief sources for an Argive empire are Ephorus, quoted by Strabo (8.3.33), and Pausanias (4.3.45). Kelly points out, however, that the archaeological evidence, although limited, does not support the notion of an Argive empire, but suggests rather 'that Argos was a small, self-sufficient village in the Argive plain, not the capital city of any wide ranging Dorian empire' (*ibid.*, 37). He observes also that the simple way of life in Dark Age Greece, which lacked sophisticated political institutions, would not have enabled a state to create and maintain an empire (*ibid.*, 43). Seneca's belief in the size and power of Argos is probably the result of the designation in tragedy of Argos (as well as Mycenae) as the city of the great Agamemnon (on this, see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 160–1). It may

also have something to do with the fact that *Argos* is frequently used to refer, not only to the town of that name, but also, in a wider sense to the whole Argolid (Tarrant, *ibid.*, 161). The designation, *Argiui*, for the Greeks, too, may be a factor.

mare/ quod scindit Isthmos *A* reads *cingit Isthmon*, *E cingit isthomos*. Gronovius suggested *scindit/findit Isthmos* as an acceptable reading based on *E*. Although there is MS consensus on *cingit*, the fact that the Isthmos is described elsewhere in Senecan drama as 'dividing' the sea (cf. *Herc. Fur.* 336 and *Thyest.* 112–13) suggests that a word of similar meaning is needed here (though there seems little reason to prefer *scindit* to *findit*) and that a trace of the original reading has been preserved in the nominative *isthomos* of *E*. See further Zwierlein (1969), 258.

376 septemque . . . regna In 326 there are said to be seven camps outside Thebes, in 373 Jocasta says that Polyneices asked for help from Greek kings (i.e. not Adrastus alone), and here mention is made of seven kingdoms which are supporting the exile. Seneca appears to be confused about the identity of the seven against Thebes (as does Statius, who identifies them as *Graiugenae reges* (*Theb.* 6.215; cf. also 12.549), although his use of *rex* may be mere hyperbole; see on 391). As is clear from Aesch. *Th.* 39ff., the seven were commanders of companies within Polyneices' Argive army, and the division was made in this way because there were seven gates of Thebes to be assaulted (cf. also E. *Ph.* 737–9; Hyg. *Fab.* 68.1 and contrast 69.6, based on Appollod. 3.58–9, where Adrastus himself is said to be one of the seven). See further on 391.

377 generi The reading of *E* is *genero*; *A* has *generi*, which is probably correct since the phrase *ad/in auxilium* invariably takes an objective genitive in writers before Augustine, according to *TLL* 2.1625.37ff. (cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 631–2 *nemo ad Herculea domus/ auxilia uenit*). *Genero* may have resulted from an unconscious association with the common formula *esse/uenire auxilio* + dative of advantage. Hirschberg *ad loc.* compares Sen. *Med.* 950, where *A* has preserved the correct reading, the genitive *patris*, while *E* has the dative *patri* (see Costa on *Med.* 947ff.).

378 causa Cf. also 384. On *causa* as one of the expressions reflecting Roman legal and juridical thought in Senecan drama, see Walter, 54–5.

378–9 causa repetentis bona est,/ mala sic petentis Jocasta recognises that Polyneices has a just grievance since he has been cheated out of his share of the kingship by Eteocles, but the wrong that has been done to him does not justify his waging war against Thebes. Contrast Oedipus' attitude expressed in 296–7 and see note *ad loc.*

The iteration of a compound verb in its simple form – here, *repetentis* . . . *petentis* – is a feature of Greek and Hittite as well as of Latin and may go back to the parent Indo-European language itself. The occurrence of the construction in the Twelve Tables demonstrates its antiquity, and the existence of over sixty examples of it in Plautus provides strong evidence of its belonging to everyday Latin. The dearth of examples from prose may be explained by the fact the discussions of the topic thus far have concentrated on poetry, as is pointed out by Charles Murgia, 'Notes on Quintilian' *CQ* 41 (1991), 183–212 at 210 n.69). On the topic, see Wendell Clausen, 'Silua Coniecturarum' *AJPh* 76 (1955), 47–62 at 49–51; Wendell Clausen, rev. of Prop. II ed. P.J. Enk, *AJPh* 86 (1965), 95–101 at 97–8; Calvert Watkins, 'An Indo-European Construction in Greek and Latin' *HSCPh* 71 (1966), 115–19; R. Renehan, 'Compound-Simplex Verbal Iteration in Plautus' *CPh* 72 (1977), 243–8. (I am indebted to Prof. Kathleen Coleman for these references.)

379 uota quae faciam parens? Seneca's preference here for *parens* over *mater* and the emphatic positioning of *parens* may be intended to point the contrast in attitude between Jocasta and Oedipus: Oedipus *parens* is as violent and destructive in his *uota* for his sons as Jocasta is desirous of peace.

380 utrimque *Utrumque* of the MSS is weak. Bentley's suggestion, *utrimque* (he compares Sen. *Troad.* 659 *utrimque est Hector*) gives considerably better sense: the whole reason for Jocasta's dilemma, elaborated in the verses which follow, is that her sons are on opposite sides. The error, resulting from the misreading of a single vowel, probably under the influence of *natum* (380), is a simple one.

380–1 nil possum pie/ pietate salua facere The juxtaposition of *pie* and *pietate* highlights the paradox. For the expression *salua pietas*, cf. Ov. *Met.* 15.108–9 *nostrumque petentia letum/ corpora missa neci salua pietate fatemur*; Sen. *Ep.* 81.16 *sed si id donari salua pietate ac fide poterit, remittet.*

381–2 quodcumque alteri/ optabo nato fiet alterius malo *Quodcumque alteri* is shorthand for *quodcumque bonum alteri*; *malo* is ablative of attendant circumstances (Hirschberg *ad loc.* compares Sen. *Oedip.* 827 *saepe eruentis ueritas patuit malo* and cites LHS 1.115–16).

383 affectu pari Cf. 461 *in utramque partem ducor affectu pari. Affectus* = *amor* (στοργή) is more common in prose than in poetry; see *TLL* 1.1190.20ff.

384 quo causa melior sorsque deterior trahit For the power of the *causa melior*, cf. Stat. *Theb.* 4.74–80. R. Mayer (*Lucan: Civil War VII* (Warminster, 1981)) on Luc. 8.94 notes that *causa melior* is a common expression in the context of civil war: he cites Vell. 2.49.2; Tac. *Hist.* 2.77; Luc. 2.531, 4.259, 7.349.

Jocasta has two reasons for favouring Polyneices: the fact that he has a just grievance and the fact that he has suffered in exile (*sors deterior*).

385 inclinat animus semper infirmo fauens Seneca reveals a sensitive perception of the protectiveness of maternal love. Hirschberg *ad loc.* notes that the same idea occurs at Sen. *Ep.* 66.27 *quoniam quidem etiam parentium amor magis in ea quorum miseretur inclinat*; cf. also Stat. *Theb.* 8.614–15 (of Antigone's and Ismene's anguish over the conflict of their brothers) *nutat utroque timor, quemnam hoc certamine uictum,/ quem uicisse uelint: tacite praeponderat exsul.*

386 miseros magis fortuna conciliat suis *Fortuna* here = *infelicitas*, *res aduersae. Sententiae* about fortune, good or otherwise, are common in both poetry and prose: see *TLL* 6.1181.72–1182.46. On 'terminal' *sententiae* in Senecan tragedy, see on 198–9.

387–402 *E* ascribes these verses to a Satelles, *A* to a Nuntius. The internal evidence suggests that the speaker is a Satelles, an old retainer: the tone of 387–8 is impatient, familiar, and reproving (see further on *regina* 387), while that of 401–2 is informal and bossy – both are what one might expect from a trusted servant rather than from an official Nuntius.

The act bears some resemblance to the τειχοσκοπία at E. *Ph.* 101–201 (Tarrant (1978), 252–3, observes that it is also similar to Plaut. *Rud.* 160ff. in terms of the setting (see on 363–442) and the description of the activity on the battlefields (388–400)) possibly the persona of the Satelles too is based upon that of the old man in the Euripidean play (see Intro., 22). The designation of the speaker as a Nuntius may

result from *A*'s failure to recognise a change of scene at 363 (so Zwierlein (1978), 147).

387 Regina The Satelles' use of Jocasta's title rather than her name is in conformity with his status as a servant (cf. the initial form of address employed by the Nutrix to her mistress in Sen. *Phaedr.* 129, *Agam.* 125. The position of *Regina* as the first word of the speech and of the verse suggests urgency, as also at Sen. *Agam.* 203 *Regina, frena temet et siste impetus.*

387–8 dum tu flebiles questus cies/ terisque tempus Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 633 *cur diem questu tero?*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1774 *quid diem questu tero?*

388–9 saeua nudatis stetit/ acies in armis *A* reads *tota*, *E salua*, corrected by Gronovius to *saeua*. Both *saeua* and *tota* make sense, but *saeua* is rhetorically more effective: it is more emotive and the 's' sound contributes to the overall effect of the accumulation of sibilants. It is difficult to see how *saeua* could have been corrupted to *tota* (or, indeed, vice versa): this may be an instance of the deliberate interpolation for which A is notorious (see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 62–3; Zwier-lein, *Krit. Komm.*, 124).

Stetit of A appears as *adest* in *E*. Here it seems that *A* has preserved the correct reading: cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 586–7 *saeua prosiluit cohors/ et stetit in armis omne uipereum genus.* On the present sense of *stetit*, see Zwierlein, *ibid.*, who cites Sen. *Oedip.* 303 (*Opima sanctas uictima ante aras stetit*) as a parallel.

nudatis . . . in armis Miller translates 'with bared swords', but *in* shows that not just swords are meant; rather *nudatis in armis* means 'amid weapons at the ready' (lit. 'uncovered'), with *armis* implying the full range of siege weaponry. *Nudo* is elsewhere used of swords (see *OLD nudo* 1d) and this seems to be an extension of that usage.

390 aquilaque pugnam signifer mota uocat This is the most strikingly Roman element in the description of the battle scene; on the Roman colouring, see Walter, 124–9.

391 septena reges bella dispositi parant On the distributive, *septena*, see on 326. *Rex* may refer hyperbolically to the chieftains in charge of the seven contingents (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.544, 6.55, 7.220, where Aeneas is described as *rex*), but Seneca seems to be confused about the composition of the seven companies (see on 376) and, as 373 and 376 suggest, he could be thinking of them as troops from

seven separate kingdoms led by seven kings.

392 Cadmea progenies The reference is to the people of Thebes in general rather than specifically to the sons of Oedipus. Seneca uses *Cadmus* as a synonym for *Thebanus*, as at *Herc. Fur.* 268 *Cadmea proles*; *Oedip.* 29–30 *Cadmeae ./. . genti.*

393 miles Collective singular *metri gratia*; see further on 574.

394 atra nubes puluere The notion that the sun, the source of life, is hidden from view by the dust contributes to the fearful nature of the scene which the Satelles describes; cf. Luc. 4.767–8, where the defeat of the Roman infantry in North Africa is heralded by the obscuring of the sun by clouds of dust.

394–5 *A* reads *uide ut . . . abscondat . . . erigat*, while *E* has *uiden ut . . . abscondit . . . erigat*, which is metrically impossible as well as syntactically inconsistent. Carolus Lachmann (*In T. Lucretii cari de rerum natura libros commentarius* (Berlin, 2nd ed. 1882)) on Lucr. 3.941, suggested that *E* should read *uiden? atra nubes . . .* , omitting *ut* and presumably changing *erigat* to *erigit.* There is, however, no good reason to follow Lachmann, as several modern editors have done, since the reading of *A* is perfectly acceptable (Zwierlein (OCT) compares Sen. *Troad.* 945 *uide ut animus ingens laetus audierit necem*). The MS consensus on *erigat* suggests that *abscondit* in *E* is a scribal error resulting from the proximity of *diem*, and that the addition of *-n* to *uide* was probably due to a scribe's (mis)interpretation of *uide ut* as a question.

The Satelles should probably be thought of as having drawn Jocasta towards him, so that he can point out to her the various activities on the battlefield. Tarrant observes ((1978), 253) that the description by the Satelles (and by Antigone in 414–18) of offstage action closely resembles Sceparnio's account of the offstage landing of Palaestra and Ampelisca in Plaut. *Rud.* 160ff.; this, he suggests, could be a comic adaptation of a feature in fourth-century tragedy which Seneca also adopted.

395–6 fumoque similes campus in caelum erigat/ nebulas For the association of dust-clouds and smoke, cf. Sil. 2.658–9 *erigat atro/ nigrantem fumo rogus . . . nubem*; Amm. 24.8.5 *fumus uel uis quaedam turbinata pulueris apparebat.*

397 si uera metuentes uident Cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 204 *an aeger animus falsa pro ueris uidet?* The implication is that fear can cause the

sense of sight to become unreliable – a contradiction to the cliché 'seeing is believing' (for which, see Otto, *oculus* 9).

398 infesta fulgent signa *Infesta . . . signa* = 'standards raised for battle'; cf., e.g., Cic. *Phil.* 5.23 *infesta . . . patriae signa a Brundisio inferebat*; Luc. 3.330–1 *aquilas infestaque signa relinquas/ urbe procul* (*TLL* 7.1406.82–3). For *fulgere* used of standards, cf., e.g., Liv. 28.14.10; Ov. *Met.* 13.700; *Sil.* 12.11 (see *TLL* 6.1510.20–1 for further examples).

398–9 subrectis adest/ frons prima telis *Frons* here = *prima acies* (*OLD frons* 6a). For the expression *prima frons*, cf., e.g., Liv. 6.13.3 *impulsa frons prima et trepidatio subsidiis inlata*; Luc. 7.521 *cum Caesar, metuens ne frons sibi prima labarat . . . .* It is not found in poetry before Seneca.

Subrectis . . . telis = 'with raised weapons'; so Liv. 7.10.10 *Romanus mucrone subrecto . . . uentrem . . . hausit.* Cf. Sen. *Ben.* 5.15.5, where *subrigo* is used of flags.

399 aurea clarum nota *Aurea nota* = 'in golden letters'. *Nota* is a collective singular; the full expression, *notae litterarum*, is frequently abbreviated to *notae* (*OLD nota* 6b). *Clarum* reveals the proximity of the enemy forces: if the Satelles could see the names clearly written, the *uexilla* could not have been very far away.

400 uexilla The military *uexillum* was a banner, which, in the Republican and early Imperial periods, was made of a square piece of red cloth; later purple fabric was used. It hung from a transverse bar, which was attached to a vertical pole. See M. Rostovtzeff, '*Vexillum* and Victory' *JRS* 32 (1942), 92–106 at 92–5. In Seneca's day the *uexillum* was used as an ensign by various detachments, while the *aquila* was the ensign of the whole legion (cf. Dio 40.18.1–3). Here, Seneca is envisaging the seven companies, each with its own *uexillum*, on which the name of its commander is written (cf. Tac. *Hist.* 2.85.1 *laceratisque uexillis nomen Vitellii praeferentibus*). Billerbeck, 68 para 137, notes that *uexillum* does not occur in poetry before Seneca (cf. Sen. *Agam.* 40), but that it is regularly used by the Flavian poets.

401 I, redde amorem fratribus, pacem omnibus For the idea that amity between the brothers means peace for all, cf. 290–4.

402 matris opposito *Oppositus* is used either literally of the placing of a material barrier (so, e.g., Sil. 10.211 *agmina . . . oppositu*

membrorum sistere certat) or figuratively of verbal opposition (so, e.g., Val. Max. 3.8 ext. 3 *oppositu eius* [sc. Socrates] *legitima grassari uia prohibita*). Either the literal or the figurative meaning could be implied here. The figurative sense would probably be more appropriate coming from a servant, but in the following speech by Antigone it is clear from her words, *nudum inter enses pectus infestos tene* (405), that she has taken the Satelles' injunction literally.

403–42 On Antigone's presence in Thebes, see on 363–442 and Intro., 6.

403 perge, o parens The vocative draws attention to *perge* (see on 182), which gains additional force from being the first word of speech and verse and is reinforced by the string of imperatives which follow it: *concita* (403), *compesce* (404), *excute* (404), *tene* (405), *solue* (406), *excipe* (406).

et concita celerem gradum This is the reading of *A*. *E* reads *perge et concita cursu celerem gradum*, which is metrically impossible. Leo, with his strong bias in favour of *E* as the *codex optimus*, emended to *perge et cita celerem gradum* – unnecessarily, since the version of *A* is clearly correct. For the expression *gradum/cursus concitare*, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 114.3 and contrast Sen. *Phaedr.* 902 *concitum celeri pede*, *Agam.* 388 *uasto concitus miles gradus*. The addition of *perge* in *E* is a simple case of dittography, with *cursu* perhaps being a gloss on *celerem gradum*. Drexler (*röm. Metr.*, 136) notes that this verse (adopting the reading of *A*) is the only one in Senecan drama where there is no fourth-foot caesura following a word-break after the second arsis: the usual pattern is that found in *Herc. Fur.* 117, *ab in/feris/reuer/sus.//hic/ prosit/ mihi.* Seneca may thus have intended the metre here to be expressive by allowing *concita celerem gradum* to flow uninterruptedly. For other instances of the expressive use of metre in Senecan drama, cf. *Phoen.* 443 with note *ad loc.*; *Herc. Fur.* 76, 144, 229, 263, 504, 775–7, 947, 951, 1198 with Fitch's notes, which include further references.

405 nudum inter enses pectus infestos tene This is the climax of the tricolon and it provides the explanation of how an elderly woman is to hold back the weapons of two entire armies: she will act as a human buffer between the opposing forces (cf. also 408 *stabo inter arma*). The prominent position of *nudum* stresses Jocasta's vulnerability among the *enses infestos*. Miller is probably correct to translate *nudum* as 'bared' and not simply as 'unarmed': Jocasta is to be imagined as offering her naked breast to the raised swords of her sons.

406 aut solue bellum, mater, aut prima excipe *Soluo* is not found elsewhere with *bellum*, but cf. Luc. 10.262 *soluere litem*; Stat. *Achil.* 2.51 *electus formae certamina soluere pastor.*

The vocative, *mater*, is given slight emphasis as the first word after the caesura; it creates a significant pause before the second *aut* clause, in which the probable consequence of the failure of Jocasta's desperate attempt at reconciling her sons is baldly and shockingly stated.

407 Ibo, Ibo Cf. 12, where Oedipus says *ibo, ibo*. A certain parallelism between the situations of Oedipus and Jocasta has already been established: both are appealed to by outsiders (a Nuntius and a Satelles respectively) to reconcile the brothers, and both are urged to do so by Antigone. With the utterance of *ibo, ibo* by Jocasta, the parallelism of situation becomes an implicit comparison between the attitudes of Oedipus and Jocasta towards the fraternal conflict: *ibo, ibo* spoken by Oedipus is an announcement of his intention to find death on Cithaeron despite his knowledge of the impending war between his sons; when Jocasta says *ibo, ibo*, she is announcing *her* intention to find death, but only if she cannot stop the war between her sons. Jocasta does not desire death, but she is willing to die in an attempt to reconcile her sons. Oedipus is not interested in preventing the fraternal war and his longing for death is, at least in part, an attempt to avoid facing the reality of the conflict and its consequences (cf. 303–4); even when he has renounced suicide, he is prepared to do no more than catch word of the war from his hiding-place (359–62).

armis obuium opponam caput Cf. Sen. *Agam.* 231 *oppone cunctis uile suppliciis caput*, 946 *ultro uulneri opponam caput.*

408–9 petere qui fratrem uolet,/ petat ante matrem The word order is effective: the parallel positioning of *petere* and *petat* and the withholding of *matrem* until the end of the sentence emphasises the fact that only by murdering their mother will the brothers be able to attack each other.

The clustering of references to Jocasta's motherhood in 403–10 is noticeable: Antigone addresses her as *parens* (403) and *mater* (406) and Jocasta refers to herself as *matrem* (409) and *matre* (410). It is as their mother that Jocasta intends to appeal to the brothers, and the emphasis is on the respect due to her motherhood.

409–10 pius . . . pius The anaphora stresses the issue: whether or not Jocasta's sons will obey her, as filial piety demands that they should. In E. *Ph.*, where the situation is less urgent since the brothers

are not yet on the battlefield, Jocasta can afford a lengthy denunciation of ambition and sovereignty and an exaltation of equality (528ff.); in Sen. *Phoen.*, the time for rational argument is past and Jocasta must use her trump-card, her position as their mother.

411 feruidos iuuenes anus The juxtaposition of *iuuenes* and *anus* is effective; cf. 289–90 *ut pater natos regas/ grauiter furentes.*

Jocasta refers to herself sixteen times in this fragment, twice as *parens* (379, 457) and thirteen times as *mater* (409, 410, 450, 456, 459, 473, 477, 485, 495, 525, 531, 578, 623); this is the only occasion on which she does not refer to herself as a mother/parent. Similarly with Oedipus: leaving aside the two occasions when he refers to himself by name (89, 312) and the one when he simply calls himself *miser* (49), Oedipus constantly refers to himself in terms of his paternity, as *pater* (3, 49, 95, 98, 121, 230, 301, 333, 336), *parens* (1, 295), or *genitor* (93), with the exception of 32 and 350, where he alludes to himself as *senex.* In the latter case, as here, the contrast is between the age of the parent and the youth of the sons (although Oedipus must be considerably younger than Jocasta; on the question of Oedipus' age, see on 32 *senex*). In view of the fact that both *senex* and *anus* are deviations from the usual pattern of self-reference by both characters, and of the parallelism and contrast implicit in the two fragments of the play, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Seneca may have intended *anus* to recall *senem* in 350 (cf. also *feruidos* in 411 and *feruet* in 352) and thereby to prompt a further comparison (see also on 407 *ibo, ibo*) between the respective attitudes of Oedipus and Jocasta towards the fraternal conflict.

413–14 aut si aliquod et me teste committi potest,/ non fiet unum The assertion in these verses is ominous-sounding but opaque: Jocasta has declared that if one brother wants to kill the other, he will have to kill her first (408–9) since she will stand between them (407–8); she now considers the possibility that *aliquod nefas* may be committed in her sight, and states that if this occurs, it will not be the only *nefas.* Either *aliquod* and *non . . . unum* refer to the respective deaths of both brothers, in which case Jocasta is assuming a prophetic role, or, more likely, *aliquod* refers to the death of one or both brothers or perhaps simply to the joining of battle, and *unum* to Jocasta's own death by suicide. In other words, if the murder of one or both brothers occurs despite Jocasta's having placed herself between them, she will kill herself, which would be a *nefas* because it

would be tantamount to matricide. The half-line contributes to the sense of something only hinted at and not fully explained; cf., e.g., Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1271–2 *uincatur mea/ fortuna dextra*; *Med.* 424–5 *inuadam deos/ et cuncta quatiam*; *Phaedr.* 671 *miserere amantis.*

414–15 Signa collatis micant/ uicina signis *Collatis . . . signis* is dative, depending on *uicinis*: '. . . near to the standards which have been brought up against them . . .'. For the gleaming standards, cf. 398 *infesta fulgent signa.* For *signa . . . micant uicina*, cf. Ov. *Fast.* 2.189 *signa propinqua micant.*

414–18 Zwierlein punctuates with a comma after *signis*, a semi-colon after *fremit*, a colon after *est*, and a dash after *preces*. Since 414 *Signa* . . . 416 *est* is an ascending tricolon with a close connection between each of the three elements, a comma after *fremit* makes more sense than a semi-colon. *Occupa . . . preces* (416), preceded by a colon, is thus a conclusion to the whole tricolon and not merely to the last element in it. Furthermore, a full-stop after *preces* instead of a dash seems to be called for, since what follows in 417–18 is a completely new thought, as *et ecce* makes clear.

416 occupa, mater, preces = 'get in first with your prayers, mother'. For this sense of *occupo*, cf. Sen. *Agam.* 193 *scelus occupandum est*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 858 *occupa ferrum ocius*, 883–4 *aemuli, Iuno, tui/ mortem occupaui* (spoken by Deineira). *Occupa*, the most important word in the verse, is given slight emphasis by its position immediately after the caesura, and the apostrophe, *mater*, further highlights it.

417 et ecce motos fletibus credas meis *Credas* is either jussive (cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 477 *sed fata credas deesse*) or potential, and the implication of the verse, as Gruter observed, is that Antigone has already pleaded with her brothers (perhaps on her way back to Thebes after leaving Oedipus). For *motos fletibus*, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1274 *mouere fletu.*

418 armis . . . compositis Perhaps an echo of Hor. *Od.* 4.14.51–2 *te caede gaudentes Sygambri/ compositis uenerantur armis.* Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that the combination occurs also at Manil. 4.58–9 *cum bene compositis uictor ciuilibus armis/ iura togae regeret.*

420 procellae turbine insanae *Insanae*, the reading of *A* (*E* has *insano*) is supported by Sen. *Thyest.* 636–7 *ferte me insanae procul,/ . . . procellae* and *Phaedr.* 736 *Fugit insanae similis procellae.* Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that the speakers in *Thyest.* and *Phaedr.* simply want to escape

from their situation and do not, like Jocasta, have a definite destination in view (this is the case also at Sen. *Thyest.* 623–4 cited below).

420–1 Cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 623–4 *Quis me per auras turbo praecipitem uehet/ atraque nube inuoluet . . . .*

422–5 Sphinx . . . Stymphalis . . . Harpyia The agents upon whom Jocasta calls to carry her to the battlefield are all large and powerful but exceedingly unpleasant: the winged Sphinx killed those who could not answer her riddle; the Stymphalian birds, slain by Hercules, are said either to have destroyed crops (DS 4.13.2), or to have had sharp feathers which wounded those who approached them (A.R. 2.1089–90), or to have been man-eaters (Paus. 8.22.4–5); the Harpies were filthy bird-like monsters (A.R. 2.187–93). The incongruous idea that these creatures, whose involvement with men was traditionally to the detriment of the latter, should perform a helpful action suggests the extent of Jocasta's distraction (cf. 427). Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes with regard to the disagreeable associations of the winged creatures: 'Die erzeugte düstere Stimmung passt vorzüglich in den Zusammenhang des Bruderkrieges'.

422 quae Sphinx It was through solving the riddle of the Sphinx that Oedipus previously saved Thebes from that monster; now, paradoxically, Jocasta calls on the same monster to help her save Thebes.

atra nube subtexens diem = 'screening the sun with its dark cloud'. The phrase suggests not only the great size of the Stymphalian bird, but also its ominous nature, since it shuts out the source of light and life.

423 praepetem Sc. *me* and translate: '[What Stymphalian bird . . . will carry] me swiftly?' *Praepes* cannot be adequately reflected in English. Originally an epithet used of birds in augury, it meant 'flying onward' and seems to have conveyed, in addition, a sense of auspiciousness, connected with the soaring nature of their flight. It was opposed to the epithet *infera*, which described those birds which flew low (Gell. 7.6). The sense of 'propitious' or 'successful' lingers even in passages where *praepes* is not used in an augural context: cf. Enn. *Ann.* 94, 407, 488 and Verg. *Aen.* 6.15 (of Daedalus) *praepetibus pennis ausus se credere caelo*, where the dominant sense is 'swift'. In this passage, Seneca appears to indulge in intellectual humour by juxtaposing *praepetem* and *pennis*, the noun with which the epithet historically belongs, without allowing the agreement. Here, also, the sense of 'propitious'

lurks, since Jocasta's mission is peace and the prevention of fraternal bloodshed. For *praepes* applied to a non-winged creature, cf. Stat. *Theb.* 9.122–3 *Pisaeaque praepetis Idae/ turma subit.*

auidis . . . pennis The reference to 'eager wings' (a combination not found elsewhere) of the *Stymphalis* may be an ironical reminder of one of its traditional destructive attributes (see on 422–5).

425 saeui regis obseruans famem The Thracian king, Phineus, offended the gods and was punished by having the Harpies inflicted upon him. These creatures descended upon, and carried off, his food each time he was about to eat, fouling what they left. He was dying of starvation when the Argonauts arrived and made an agreement with him, whereby they would rid him of the Harpies if he would help them in their quest for the Golden Fleece (cf. A.R. 2.209ff.; Val. Fl. 4.423ff.; Hyg. *Fab.* 19). Legend contains no evidence that Phineus was a fierce or cruel king; hence *saeuus* should probably be translated as 'frantic'; cf. *Oedip.* 925 and 1004, where *saeuus* is used with this sense of Oedipus and Jocasta respectively.

426 et inter acies proiciet raptam duas One must imagine Jocasta to be hurrying towards the battlefield as she speaks this last line.

427–42 These verses are unique in classical drama in terms of dramatic technique. Firstly, Seneca flouts the convention whereby off-stage action is reported to the audience by a witness – frequently a messenger – *subsequent* to the completion of the action (as do Aeschylus in *Supp.* 713–23 and Euripides in *Ph.* 101–201). Secondly, by making the Satelles describe Jocasta's dash from the walls of Thebes to the battlefield as it is taking place (cf. Sen. *Agam.* 867–909, where Cassandra describes on stage the events which are occurring at the fatal banquet inside the palace), he achieves an unparalleled change of scene: the Satelles' report ends with Jocasta's arrival on the battlefield, which is the setting of the act which follows (443–664) (see Intro., 39–40). As Tarrant observes ((1978), 252), this 'transition speech' combines the properties of narrative and dramatic poetry; he notes Sen. *Phaedr.* 580–6 and *Agam.* 775–81 as other instance of a 'narrative' transition between acts. One might also compare *Med.* 382–96, where the Nurse's words provide a transition from Medea's interview with Creon to the scene in which she plans her vengeance.

427 Vadit furenti similis aut etiam furit For parallels to this contrast between the appearance and the reality, see Hirschberg *ad*

loc. who cites, *inter alia*, Verg. *Aen.* 6.454 *aut uidet aut uidisse putat per nubila lunam*; Ov. *Met.* 6.667–8 *corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares:/ pendebant pennis*, 13.607 *et primo similis uolucri, mox uera uolucris.*

For the expression *furenti similis*, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1009 *Megara furenti similis . . . fugit.*

428–34 The hyperbolic images in these lines are conventional and in conformity with the traditional loftiness of the tragic genre. Their occurrence at this point in the drama is significant: Armisen-Marchetti (*Sapientiae Facies*, 358–9) observes that images of this type in the tragedies 'servent le plus souvent à souligner les sommets dramatiques ou les paroxysmes psychiques', while themselves adding to the intensification of emotion.

428–9 sagitta qualis Parthica uelox manu/ excussa fertur A striking instance of Roman colouring: the mounted archers of the Parthians were their strongest military weapon, as Crassus had discovered (cf. Dio 40.2–4), and the fatal speed and accuracy of the 'Parthian shot' was well-known. For references in poetry to Parthian arrows, cf., e.g., Hor. *Od.* 2.13.17–18; Ov. *Rem. Am.* 157; Sen. *Thyest.* 383–4; Stat. *Theb.* 6.597; for Parthian arrows used in a comparison to express speed, cf. Verg. *Georg.* 4.313–14; Luc. 1.230; and especially Verg. *Aen.* 12.856–8, where the speed of a Parthian arrow describes the flight of one of the Dirae from heaven to the battlefield: *non secus ac neruo per nubem impulsa sagitta,/ . . . Parthus quam . . . ,/ . . . torsit.*

429–30 insano ratis/ premente uento rapitur For *insanus uentus*, cf., e.g., Stat. *Theb.* 6.300 *Aeolus insanis statuat certamina uentis*; Sil. 10.226–7 *insani quamquam contraria uenti/ exarmat uis.* For the image, cf. Ov. *Met.* 2.184–5 (of Phaethon) *ita fertur, ut acta/ praecipiti pinus borea.*

430–2 qualis cadit/ delapsa caelo stella, cum stringens polum/ rectam citatis ignibus For the image, cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 738–40 [*Fugit*] . . . *ocior cursum rapiente flamma,/ stella cum uentis agitata longos/ porrigit ignes.*

Stringens = 'skimming over'; cf. Ov. *Met.* 11.733 *stringebat summas ales miserabilis undas.*

433 attonita cursu fugit et binas statim Cf. Sen. *Med.* 675–6 *namque ut attonito gradu/ euasit.*

Seneca here continues the metaphor of the star (430–2) since *cursus* is regularly used of the course of a heavenly body (*OLD cursus* 5b, 6a).

Binas = *duas*: the adjective *bini* can be substituted for the cardinal

number *duo* when the two things referred to are the only two in question; cf., e.g., Liv. 29.26.2 *bini consules cum binis exercitibus*; Manil. 1.283 *in binas Arctos.*

434–5 uicta . . . bella A clever conceit: war is the usual arena for conquest, but Seneca uses the participle *uicta* of the war itself: 'the war has been conquered'.

435 in alternam necem = 'to cause mutual slaughter'. For this use of *alternus*, cf. Prop. 2.30.21 *spargere et alterna communis caede Penatis*; Sen. *Ep.* 95.31 *Non pudet homines . . . gaudere sanguine alterno.*

435–6 iamque in alternam necem/ illinc et hinc miscere cupientes Miller translates as though *manus* were nominative: '. . . the bands, eager to join from both sides in mutual slaughter . . .'. It seems better, however, to take *manus* as the object of *miscere*, the expression *manus miscere* (= 'to join battle') being a common one. The fact that no subject is expressed is hardly problematic since it is perfectly clear from the context that *tenent* refers to the warriors on the opposing sides. The reading of *A*, *manum*, may be an error influenced by *necem* (435), or a deliberate attempt to clarify the syntax. Whatever its cause, it cannot be correct, since in this context the use of the singular for the plural would make no sense: the joining of battle presupposes more than one side and therefore more than one hand.

437 librata There is MS consensus on *uibrata*, but Heinsius' emendation, *librata* (= 'poised', 'aimed'), gives far better sense. Heinsius' stated reason for the emendation is to avoid repetition with *uibrat* in 339 (*Aduers.*, 57), which is not convincing in view of the abundance of non-emphatic repetition in Senecan drama. A more compelling argument is that *tela uibrat* suggests continuing aggressive movement, which is at odds with *dextra suspensa.* The aggressive connotation of *uibrare* emerges in 439, where the contrast is made between the weapons of the brothers, which are still being brandished, and those of the rest of the soldiers, which are lying idle. Cf. Sen. *Agam.* 900 (of Clytemnaestra about to murder Agamemnon) *sic hic et illuc impiam librat manum.*

438 paci fauetur For the prosaic impersonal passive, cf. Cic. *De Or.* 2.207 *studiis . . . eorum ceteris commodandi fauetur*; Quint. *Inst.* 5.7.31 *huic Romae ita fautum est, ut . . .* (*TLL* 6.373.35–7).

For the expression, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 90.26 *paci fauet et genus humanum ad concordiam uocat.*

438–9 The staccato effect achieved by the asyndeton in the ascending tricolon contributes to the atmosphere of suspense, as does *uibrat* with its implication of barely controlled violence. *Omnium* here = 'of all the rest', in contrast to the brothers; for this use of *omnes*, cf., e.g., Plaut. *Bacch.* 892–4 *Ita me Iuppiter Iuno Ceres/ . . . / Summanus Sol Saturnus dique omnes ament*; Cic. *Rab. Perd.* 21 *L. Metellus, Ser. Galba, C. Serranus, P. Rutilius, C. Fimbria, Q. Catulus omnesque qui tum erant consulares* (*TLL* 9.614.70–8).

omnium ferrum latet/ cessatque tectum A vexed line. *E* reads *omnium ferrum iacet/ cessatque tectum*, while *A* has *omnium ferrum latet/ cessatque telum.* As Zwierlein ((1980), 188–9) observes, confusion in the MS tradition of Senecan drama between *iaceo*, *lateo*, and *pateo* is frequent: he cites *Oedip.* 212 as another instance of confusion between *iaceo* and *lateo.* Here, *latet* (*E*) is probably correct, since *iacet* (*A*) (= 'be idle') is not used elsewhere of weapons (see *TLL* 7.30.74–8). *Latet* = 'is sheathed'; cf. Varr. *RR.* 1.48.3 *uagina ut in qua latet conditum gladium.* With regard to *telum/tectum*, either is possible in terms of metre and sense, but *tectum* is rhetorically more effective since it contrasts more forcibly with the immediately following *uibrat*; as the *lectio difficilior*, it should probably be preferred to *telum.*

440 laniata canas mater ostendit comas For the accusative of respect with *lanio*, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 12.605–6 *filia prima manu flauos Lauinia crinis/ et roseas laniata genas*; Ov. *Met.* 4.139–40 *et laniata comas . . . / uulnera suppleuit lacrimis.* On the origin of this 'Greek' accusative, see R.G. Austin (*P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus* (Oxford, 1964)) on Verg. *Aen.* 2.57, Fordyce on Catull. 64.64–5, and KS 1.291. *Canas* emphasises Jocasta's age, thereby heightening the pathos of her situation and the audience's sense of the selfishness of the brothers.

441 inrigat fletu genas Seneca is the only classical author who uses *inrigo* of *umores corporis* outside a medical context; cf. *Oedip.* 346 *irrigat plagas cruor*; *Troad.* 965 *inrigat fletus genas*; *Phaedr.* 381–2 *genae/ rore irrigantur* (*TLL* 7.419.61–76).

442 negare matri qui diu dubitat potest I.e. the longer the delay in replying, the more likely it is that the brothers will not do as Jocasta asks. Seneca, having prepared for the next act, sharpens the suspense by suggesting that Polyneices and Eteocles may reject their mother's plea: the prominent position of *negare* is significant; note also *abnuentes* in 441.

Act 4 (443–664)

443–664 This act, as Opelt, 280, observes, appears to be an innovation on the part of Seneca. Certainly, Seneca treats the encounter between Jocasta and her sons very differently from Euripides. In part, this is dictated by the different circumstances: in Sen. Phoen., the situation is considerably more urgent since it takes place on the battlefield itself, whereas in E. *Ph.* Eteocles is still planning the defence of Thebes and the brothers meet Jocasta inside the city. Hence, in E. *Ph.*, there is still the opportunity for an ἀγών scene, in which each brother states his case (469–525), but in Sen. *Phoen.*, the immediacy of the danger eliminates that possibility. However, it is also true that Seneca's creation of a different setting for the scene between mother and sons reflects his particular interest in the situation. Euripides' interest in the fraternal conflict focuses not on Eteocles, who is portrayed as a stereotypical tyrant, but on Polyneices, and the moral and ethical problem raised by his hostile intentions towards Thebes in an effort to regain what is rightfully his. Seneca's Eteocles, like the Eteocles of Euripides, is painted in unrelieved black and is of little interest, but Seneca, unlike the Greek dramatist, is not much concerned with Polyneices and the moral issue either. He allows Jocasta to admit that Polyneices has the better cause (384) and to say that nevertheless he should not be attacking his city (378–9), but he concentrates not on the brothers themselves, but on Jocasta's reactions to their strife. Eteocles and Polyneices are nowhere named and have little to say for themselves (see on 281–2). They are important only insofar as their conflict provokes very different emotional responses from each of their parents: Oedipus' perverse reaction (331–47) is bound up with his own feelings of guilt, but Jocasta's is not (for Jocasta's attitude to her crime, see on 451–4): she reacts as any anxious mother might, being desperate to protect the physical and moral well-being of both her sons, irrespective of who is innocent and who is guilty.

443 in me arna et ignes uertite, in me omnis ruat The three elisions seem to be expressive, suggesting Jocasta's sense of urgency. For expressive elision in Seneca, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 606–7, 1291 with Fitch *ad loc.*; in Latin poetry in general, see Soubiran, 616–45, who tends, however, to be somewhat fanciful. The double elision of a monosyllable (*me*) in a single line appears to be unique in Senecan drama (see Soubiran, 421–2).

For the expression *in me . . . uertite*, cf. Liv. 1.13.3 (of the Sabine women) *in nos uertite iras* and see Friedrich, 125 n.3.

That Eteocles and Polyneices are not themselves carrying firebrands is suggested by 467ff., in which no mention is made of these; thus, one should perhaps translate: 'Get your men to turn . . . ' (cf. 540, where the *faces* are clearly not being wielded by Polyneices himself).

The expression *arma et ignes*, or variants thereof, is almost as proverbial in Latin as it is in English ('fire and the sword'); cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 2.664 *per tela, per ignis*; Ov. *Met.* 3.698 *instrumenta necis ferrumque ignesque parantur*; Sen. *Ep.* 24.14 *gladios et enses*, and see Otto, *ignis* 1). Firebrands were commonly hurled at ships and besieged cities (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 9.72, 12.521); occasionally, however, they were also employed (as here, it would appear) as weapons in close combat, but this was considered unusual: cf. Liv. 4.33.1–2, where the blazing torches wielded by the enemy army cause it to be described as a *noua . . . acies inaudita ante id tempus inusitataque.* Hence, Jocasta's demand that firebrands be directed against her may have seemed particularly gruesome to Seneca's Roman audience.

443–4 in me omnis ruat/ una iuuentus Perhaps a deliberate echo of Oedipus' words at 335, *frater in fratrem ruat*, and one which serves further to point the contrast between the attitudes of Oedipus and Jocasta to the conflict.

On elision of a monosyllable in the first foot of Senecan trimeters, see Zwierlein, *Proleg.*, 208–11.

444 una *A* has *una*, *E* has *unam*, which is the reading favoured by all modern editors. Either reading is possible in terms of sense and metre and the choice is not an easy one. The attraction of *unam* is obvious and consists in the stress which it lays on Jocasta's isolation and vulnerability in the face of *omnis . . . iuuentus*. The appeal of *una* is a little more subtle: it emphasises the coming together of the youth, whether Argive or Theban, in common cause against the aged Jocasta; ironically, the two brothers, who have been portrayed as uncompromisingly hostile to each other, are urged to come together, not against a common foe but against their mother, a defenseless old woman. The reading of *A* appeals, not only because of the characteristic irony which it expresses, but also because it heralds the even stronger expression of the same notion in 446, *ciuis atque hostis simul. . . .* One may note also that *omnis ruat una* appears to be an echo of Vergil's *una omnes ruere* (*Aen.* 8.689).

444–5 ab Inachio . . . muro Inachus was a mythical river-god, who is often portrayed as the first Argive king. *Muro* here = *urbe* by synecdoche; the plural, *muri*, is not uncommonly used thus in poetry, but the only other instances of *murus* used with the sense of *urbs* occur at Ov. *Her.* 1.48 *murus quod fuit, esse solum*, Prop. 4.1.125–6 *scandentisque Asis consurgit uertice murus,/ murus ab ingenio notior ille tuo.*

447 [hunc petite uentrem qui dedit fratres uiro] Zwierlein argues convincingly for the deletion of this verse: he suggests, following Axelson, that it was interpolated to explain *ex quo* (450) and was influenced by Sen. *Oedip.* 1038–9, and points out that it anticipates and destroys the effect of the threat contained in 450 *an dico et ex quo?*; also that 447 suggests misleadingly that Jocasta is inviting her own destruction as expiation for her crime of incest (*Krit. Komm.*, 125). One might add, further, that 447 considerably reduces the impact of *mea membra passim spargite ac diuellite* (448).

448 mea membra passim spargite ac diuellite Zwierlein reads *haec* with *E*, but *mea* (*A*) is supported by Sen. *Troad.* 414 *mea membra raperet et graui gemeret sono* (cf. also [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1791 *carpent greges mea membra diri*). If 447 is deleted, the appeal of *haec*, following *hunc* (447), is much reduced. *Mea*, on the other hand, is effective after *in me . . . in me* (443) and anticipating *ego* (449), in a context where Jocasta is stressing that *she*, their mother, is the buffer between her warring sons.

Spargite ac diuellite is an instance of hysteron-proteron; for *diuello* and *spargo* used of dismemberment, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.600–1. The fact that Jocasta challenges her sons to kill her by tearing her limb from limb is not insignificant. The best-known victim of dismemberment in classical mythology and literature is Pentheus. Seneca has already made the comparison between Jocasta and Agaue (363–6); he now prompts a further comparison: Agaue dismembered her son, Jocasta urges her sons to dismember her.

449 ego utrumque peperi – ponitis ferrum ocius This, according to Strzelecki, 88, is one of only five instances in the genuine plays of Seneca where there is elision in a first-foot anapaest between the two short syllables of the resolved thesis. Cf. 489, which begins with the same phrase, *ego utrumque*; also *Oedip.* 998, *Herc. Fur.* 1035 (the first-foot anapaest in both these instances is formed by the words *bene habet*), and *Thyest.* 324 (*male agis*).

ponitis ferrum ocius Cf. 438–9 *omnium ferrum latet/ cessatque*

tectum – uibrat in fratrum manu. Ocius should be taken as the comparative of the adverb *ociter* rather than as the neuter form of the adjective *ocior*, with *igitur* understood after *ponitis*: 'are you therefore [i.e. since it is I, your mother, who asks you] laying down your swords more swiftly?' Or it may be that *ocius* should be translated as 'too swiftly' and not 'rather swiftly', i.e. that Jocasta is still urging her sons to kill her rather than pleading with them to put down their swords. In this case *an dico et ex quo* (450) means 'Must I remind you who your father is (to make you stop hesitating to kill me)? This latter interpretation, however, is not very plausible because it suggests that Jocasta wants her sons to kill her to expiate her own guilt, which is not the point here. On the usage and character of *ocius*, see further Hirschberg *ad loc.*

450 an dico et ex quo *An* here introduces a second question which is an alternative to the first; so, e.g., Verg. *Ecl.* 8.108 *credimus? an, qui amant, ipsi sibi somnia fingunt?* The point of recalling Oedipus would seem to be to warn the brothers against perpetuating impious deeds of violence in the family.

Dico is an instance of the present indicative used with deliberative force in a question. This occurs especially in the first person singular (LHS 2.308); it is very common in early Latin (especially in comedy) and less so, but far from infrequent, in later poetry: cf. Catull. 1.1 *Qui dono lepidum nouum libellum?*; Verg. *Aen.* 4.534 *et passim quid ago?*, 3.88 *quem sequimur?*; Val. Fl. 5.285 *quibus addimur armis?*

dexteras matri date For the Romans, the right hand symbolised the pledge of friendship (one could not extend one's right hand unless one's sword had been sheathed).

The form *dextera* occurs, *metri gratia*, twenty-seven times in the plays of Seneca, while *dextra* occurs sixty-one times (Busa and Zampolli 1.277).

450–1 dexteras matri date,/ date dum piae sunt Anaphora and alliteration lend emphasis to Jocasta's plea, which, as Fantham ((1983), 65) observes, contrasts strongly with Oedipus' harsh injunction at 358 *date arma matri.*

For the restrictive force of *dum*, cf. 526–7 *Hinc modo recedant arma, dum nullum nefas/ Mars saeuus audet* and see LHS 2.612.

451–4 Jocasta here uses *error* to describe her incestuous marriage (see Dingel, 83, on the Stoic significance), whereas at 366–7 she calls it *scelus* (by implication, since the reference is actually to Agaue, with

whom she compares herself). This does not mean that Jocasta's perception of her own and Oedipus' guilt has altered; rather it reveals that Jocasta shares something of both Oedipus' and Antigone's understanding of *scelus.* Jocasta's sense of pollution, like Oedipus', causes her to view their actions, although committed in ignorance, as a *scelus:* hence the paradox here, whereby they are said to have been made *nocentes* by an *error* (the paradox is highlighted by the placing of *error* and *nocentes* at the beginning and end of the clause respectively, the former immediately following the caesura in 451 and the latter immediately preceding that in 452). Antigone, on the other hand, regards the incestuous marriage as no more than an *error* and therefore guilt-free, since it was not a deliberate crime (see on 203–15). However, the fact that Jocasta here claims that *error inuitos adhuc/ fecit nocentes* (451–2) and contrasts this state of affairs with *hoc primum nefas/ inter scientes geritur* (453–4) suggests that although her sense of guilt will not allow her to dismiss her own actions as being free of blame, she nevertheless perceives intellectually that deliberate wrongdoing is a more serious matter morally than unintentional wrongdoing. (On the implications of *scelus*, *error*, and *nocens* in Senecan drama, see Zwierlein, *Hercules im Lichte*, 35–42.) Cf. E. *Ph.*, where Jocasta expresses no sense of guilt at all and where her attitude to her incestuous marriage and the offspring born of it is summed up in her words, δεῖ φέρειν τὰ τῶν θεῶν (382). Cf. also Sen. *Oedip.*, where Jocasta appears to be little troubled by guilt and, like Jocasta of Sen. *Phoen.*, sees fate as responsible for the crimes of herself and Oedipus (*Fati ista culpa est: nemo fit fato nocens* 1019), until Oedipus rejects her (1020–4), whereupon she is overcome by a sense of her pollution (1025–6 *omne confusum perit,/ incesta, per te iuris humani decus*) and commits suicide.

Jocasta's argumentation here recalls Ov. *Met.* 3.141–2 (of Actaeon): *at bene si quaeras, Fortunae crimen in illo,/ non scelus inuenies; quod enim scelus error habebat?*

453–4 hoc primum nefas/ inter scientes geritur For the (implied) injunction not to add deliberate to unintentional wrongdoing, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1300–1 *Ecce iam facies scelus/ uolens sciensque.*

454 geritur *Geritur* here = *committitur*: this is the earliest instance of *gero* used with reference to crime (*TLL* 6.1938. 24–45). The present tense is significant: the brothers' hands may still be *piae* (451) in that no blood has as yet been shed, but the breaking of the bond of *pietas* implicit in the very planning of war between them means that a crime

is being committed even before the battle has begun (cf. Jocasta's words to Polyneices at 542–3 *ut recedas, magna pars sceleris tamen/ uestri peracta est*).

456 donate matrem pace All the MSS read *donate matri pacem*, which results in a fourth-foot spondee.

Moricca, who retains the MS reading, defends the metrical irregularity by citing what he claims to be two other metrical anomalies in Seneca's tragedies: *Troad.* 264 *uincendo didici. Troia nos tumidos facit* as a second-foot dactyl and 932 *altum uadoso Sigeon spectans sinu* as another fourth-foot spondee. In the first case, however, the final syllable of *uincendo* should be scanned as short, and in the second, the middle syllable of *Sigeon* is short: parallels can be found for both instances in Seneca and elsewhere (see Axelson, *Korruptelenkult*, 45; Fantham, ad loc.; and my note on *Phoen.* 558).

Editors and commentators have produced various conjectures to improve the text, among which are:

1. *donate matrem pace* (Avantius)
2. *donate matri bella* (Gronovius)
3. *donate matri pacta* (L. Müller)
4. *donate matri facere* (Peiper)
5. *domate Martem pace* (M. Mueller)

Of these, 3. and 4. also fail to make good sense: L. Müller (*De Re Metrica Poetarum Latinorum praeter Plautum et Terentium* (Leipzig, 1894), 185) explains *donate* in 3. as = *concedite*, 'confirm . . . (to)', but this is stretching the sense of *donare* too far; 4., which must mean 'grant it to your mother to act', is obscure.

This leaves 1., 2., and 5., as serious contenders. M. Mueller's ((1901), 264) conjecture, *domate Martem pace*, is an ingenious one which does not demand a radical departure from the MS reading and which makes good sense in the general context of Jocasta's plea to her sons to abandon war in favour of peace. It is not, however, particularly appropriate to the immediate context (454–8), in which the decision as to whether or not to join battle is presented as a decision as to whether to allow Jocasta to live or not – hence the retention of *mater* in some form seems desirable (cf. *parens* 457). The conjecture of Gronovius, *donate matri bella*, which has found recent support from Zwierlein and Hirschberg, must be interpreted as meaning 'give up war for your mother's sake'. It is a clever, although rather adventurous, conjecture, which fits well into the context, and this use of *dono*

has a close parallel in Petr. 138.6 *Paris Helenen huic donasset et deas*, where *dono* occurs in a similar sense with a dative; cf. also Sen. *Contr.* 10.3.3; Petr. 31.1; Stat. *Theb.* 3.59. It could be that this unusual use of *donare* confused scribes and resulted in the corruption of *bella* to *pacem*.

However, Avantius' (Venice, Aldine edition, 1517) *donate matrem pace* seems to be the simplest answer to the textual problem: it is unobjectionable as far as sense, usage, and context are concerned, and the corruption to *donate matri pacem* is easily explicable, since *donare* occurs at least as frequently with a dative as with an accusative of the recipient (in Seneca, far more frequently: 47:13). Further, on the stylistic and rhetorical level, *donate matrem pace* (unlike *donate matri bella*) throws the emphasis onto 'mother' (as the direct object) – appropriately, in the context of a plea made on the basis of *sancta pietas*. It also completes what appears to be a pattern of alliteration in 455–6: *sancta si pietas placet* (455) being matched by *pace; si placiut scelus* (456). Finally, it does not, as Gronovius' conjecture does, anticipate, and thereby reduce the impact of, *bellum . . . belli* in 458.

457 maius paratum est Here, the murder of a parent is considered a greater wrong than the slaying of a brother: contrast 269–70, where Oedipus presents his incest as a more heinous crime than his parricide, and see on 269 *maius scelus*.

458 proinde bellum tollite aut belli moram This verse seems to be a deliberate echo of Antigone's words to Jocasta in 406: *aut solue bellum, mater, aut prima excipe*. The challenge which Antigone issued to Jocasta is passed on by Jocasta to her sons. *Moram* here can be understood both in a temporal and in a physical sense: Jocasta is a *mora* both because she is delaying the start of the battle (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 10.427–8 *Abantem/ . . . interimit, pugnae nodumque moramque*) and because she is a physical obstacle to it (cf. Sen. *Agam.* 211, where Hector is described as *sola Danais . . . et bello mora*, with Tarrant *ad loc.*).

459 Sollicita cui nunc *E* reads *cui nunc sollicita*, which gives an anomalous second-foot dactyl. The version of *A*, *cui sollicata nunc*, gives a self-contained tribrach in the second foot of which I have found no other instances in *Phoen. Sollicita cui nunc* is the version accepted by all modern editors.

459–60 alterna prece/ uerba admouebo Fitch on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 397 observes that the use of *admoueo* with abstract nouns is a feature of everyday language (cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 454, *Ps.* 1282; Hor. *Sat.*

1.1.27; Liv. 4.41.9). It may be noted, in addition, that *admoueo* derives from Roman military language (see Walter, 127 n.248 and cf., e.g., Liv. 42.57.10 *in eundem locum rex copias admouit*; Tac. *Ann.* 2.17 *admotis sagitariis*; a contrast is thereby established between the sons, who *arma admouent*, and Jocasta, whose only weapons are her pleas.

460 amplectar Probably future indicative rather than present (deliberative) subjunctive in view of *admouebo* in the preceding sentence. *Amplectar* here suggests perhaps not only Jocasta's natural maternal affection, but also her suppliant role: for *amplector* used of the clasp of a suppliant, cf. Plaut. *Cist.* 567 *anus ei amplexa est genua plorans.*

461 affectu pari Cf. 383 *affectu pari* and contrast 384–6, where Jocasta admits to a slight bias in favour of Polyneices, in accordance with which she now turns to embrace him first.

462–3 si . . . ualent,/ nunc alter aberit In Cicero, as in authors of didactic works, such as Quintilian and Vitruvius, a future tense in the apodosis of a conditional sentence is regularly preceded (or followed) by a future tense in the protasis. In general, however, the construction *si* + present . . . future is more common: cf., e.g., Plaut. *Asin.* 193 *si mihi dantur duo talenta . . . hanc tibi noctem dabo*; Sall. *Cat.* 58.9 *si uincimus, omnia tuta erunt*; Verg. *Aen.* 7.312 *flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta mouebo* (see KS 1.46, 2.392).

463 iam numquam *Iam* here, as always when followed by *numquam*, has the sense of 'from this time on', i.e. 'in the future': cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 310 *iam numquam audibis uerba tot tam suauia*; Ter. *Hec.* 465 *ille reuiuiscet iam numquam*; Ov. *Trist.* 1.3.32 *iamque oculis numquam templa uidenda meis* (*TLL* 7.100.44–6).

464 nisi sic I.e. in a state of hostility. Cf. the vague *uel sic* in 3.
iunge complexus A variation on *iungo oscula*, for which cf. Ov. *Her.* 2.93–4; Val. Fl. 4.701–2; Stat. *Theb.* 12.707–8.

465–6 qui tot labores totque perpessus mala/ . . . uides For the idea, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.283–5 *ut te post multa tuorum/ funera, post uarios hominumque urbis labores/ defessi aspicimus.* For the expression, cf. 504–5 *te maria tot diuersa, tot casus uagum/ egere.*

467–70 Seneca did not visualise Polyneices clearly at this point. He describes him as standing with his sword drawn and with his spear *cupientem excuti* (468), being brandished. He is also holding his shield. It would be physically impossible for a man to *brandish* – although he

could *hold* – both sword and spear and at the same time to retain his grip on his shield.

While recognising the modern tendency to discern sexual imagery and innuendo where it does not exist, it seems, nevertheless, that 467–70 contain so many *doubles entendres* as to demand acknowledgement of the underlying obscene implications of the passage. Polyneices could not be holding his arms in the way described by Seneca; the picture is exaggerated, and one reason for this may be Seneca's desire to make the most of the opportunity for sexual innuendo. *Accede* (see Adams, *Lat. Sex. Vocab.*, 175–6), *uagina* (*ibid.*, 20, 219), *hasta* (*ibid.*, 19–20), *coire* (*ibid.*, 179), and joining of breasts (*ibid.*, 180) are all attested sexual euphemisms. To these one may add *ensis* (*gladius* was a common term for a penis and, as Adams observes (*ibid.*, 19), terms for weapons were in general recognised as having a potential double meaning) and *solum* (female genitalia were frequently referred to in terms of a field, land, a garden, and the like; *ibid.*, 83–4). In support of the idea that Seneca is here hinting at the perpetuation of incest in the family of Oedipus, one should note Oedipus' fear that he will rape Antigone (49–50) and his veiled injunction to his sons to emulate him by sexually assaulting their mother (358 with note *ad loc.*). Furthermore, sexual innuendo is a feature of declamation (Adams, *Lat. Sex. Vocab.*, 223), the influence of which on Seneca's dramatic style is powerful in other respects.

467 impium For *impius* used loosely of weapons, cf. Cic. *Planc.* 98 *impium ferrum ignisque pestiferos*; Ov. *Met.* 7.396 *sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis* (for *impius ensis*, cf. also Ov. *Met.* 14.802); Sen. *Agam.* 78–9 *impia quas non/ arma fatigant*). Here, *impium* gains a special significance if one admits the underlying suggestion of incest.

471 uinculo frontem exue *Vinculo* here refers to the helmet itself, *pars pro toto*; elsewhere, *uinculum* denotes the helmet-straps (so Ov. *Met.* 12.141 *uincla trahit galeae*; Stat. *Theb.* 2.634–5 *nec uincla coercent/ undantem fletu galeam*). For *uinculum* used of restrictive clothing, cf. Ov. *Fast.* 1.410 *impediunt teneros uincula nulla pedes* (of shoes); Stat. *Theb.* 12.89–90 *frontisque superbae/ uincula* (of a crown).

472 tegumen capitis belligeri For the expression used of a helmet, cf. also Verg. *Aen.* 7.632; Ov. *Met.* 3.108. For its occurrence in a non-military context, cf. Ov. *Met.* 1.672; Sen. *Cons. Helu.* 12.7.9.

Belligeri occurs first in Ov. *AA.* 2.672 and *Trist.* 3.11.13. On its subsequent use, see Billerbeck, 18 para. 35.

473 ora matri redde Jocasta wants Polyneices to 'restore' his face to her by removing the helmet which has been concealing it. *Redde* is a little awkward in the context, and it is tempting to consider Heinsius' conjecture (*Aduers.*, 57), *ora matri crede* (*credo* = 'entrust'), which, as he points out, would tie in neatly with *an timeo matris fidem* (477). However, at this point Polyneices has not yet shown fear of Eteocles, so there would be no reason for Jocasta to urge him to 'entrust' his face to her; the emphasis is simply on her desire to see his face.

quo uultus refers *Quo* here = 'why' rather than 'whither', as 474 reveals. Seneca uses *refero* as though it were *auerto* (cf. Ov. *Trist.* 4.3.49–50 *si tu . . . / auertis uultus et subit ora rubor*): *refero* is usually used of redirecting one's gaze, face, or attention *to* something, with *ad/in* + accusative (*OLD refero* 14), but cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 953 *quo, nate, uultus huc et huc acies refers. Quo uultus refers/ . . . manum* is one of the few pieces of stage business in the play; see further Intro., 39–42.

On Seneca's interest in the description of facial expression and bodily movement, see Elizabeth C. Evans, 'A Stoic Aspect of Senecan Drama: Portraiture' *TAPhA* 81 (1950), 169–84.

474 manum On *manus* as an important word-motif in Sen. *Phoen.*, see on 51.

475 affusa totum corpus amplexu tegam Cf. Ov. *Met.* 6.298–9 *quam toto corpore mater,/ tota ueste tegens.* There seems to be no parallel for the use of *affundo* with reference to an embrace, although the sense (= 'with my enveloping embrace') is clear.

476 tuo cruori per meum fiet uia For *uia* used of the flowing of blood, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 10.487 *una eademque uia sanguis animusque sequuntur.* For the idea, cf. Sen. *Contr.* 9.4.3 *dura, fili; ad tyrannum tibi per patrem eundem est*, and English 'over my dead body'.

477 quid dubius haeres? Clearly Polyneices has not responded to Jocasta's request that he disarm. She is to be imagined as withdrawing slightly, pausing, and then, in a different tone, asking *quid dubius haeres?* Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 371, where Megara's lack of response to Lycus' proposal that she marry him evokes the question *quid truci uultu siles?*

an times matris fidem? Cf. E. *Ph.* 272 πέποιθα μέντοι μητρί κ'οὐ πέποιθ'ἅμα. *An* introduces a second question which is a suggested answer to the first: cf., e.g., Plaut. *Most.* 489 *quis homo? an gnatus meus?*; Ter. *Eun.* 907 *quam ob rem tandem? an quia pudet?* (*OLD an* 2). *Fidem* here

has the sense of *perfidiam*; on this use of *fides*, see further Hirschberg *ad loc.*

After 477 *E* has 480 (*fides habenda est. redde iam capulo manum*), with both parts of the verse being ascribed to Jocasta. This cannot be correct: although 480 could follow 477 in terms of sense, its transposition would leave an impossible gap between 479 and 481.

478 Timeo Polyneices picks up Jocasta's *times* (477) in his response (cf. 215–16, 644–5, 653–4, 660–1). For examples of this device in the other plays, see Zwierlein, *Rezitationsdramen*, 170 n.9; for an analysis of the technique, see B. Seidensticker, *Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas* (Heidelberg, 1969), 38–45.

It would seem appropriate to punctuate with a colon after *Timeo*, rather than a semi-colon as Zwierlein does, since the following clause, *nihil iam iura naturae ualent* is explanatory (compare 79 *resiste: tantis in malis uinci mori est*). The strong sense-pause in the second foot is unusual and emphatic; cf. 79, 209, 330, 331.

479 ista fratrum exempla A generalisation for rhetorical effect of the single instance of Eteocles' perfidy: cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1284 *pauidesque matres* (i.e. Megara), *Med.* 278–9 *nouas/ . . . coniuges* (i.e. Creusa), 1007–8 *uirginum* (i.e. Creusa) *thalamos pete,/ relinque matres* (i.e. Medea).

ne quidem *Ne quidem* is prosaic; *non ipsa* would be normal poetic usage (see Axelson, *Unpoetische Wörter*, 92). Of the nine occurrences in poetry noted by Axelson, two occur in Senecan drama (cf. also *Troad.* 481–2 *superestque uasta ex urbe ne tantum quidem,/ quo lateat infans*).

480–585 The first twenty lines of Jocasta's speech (480–99) are highly charged, as she tries to ensure the delay of hostilities by persuading her sons to disarm: the imperatives (*redde* 480, *astringe* 481, *mane* 482, *pone* 483, *audite* 488, *gaude* 490), the short, staccato sentences (cf. especially 487–90), and the terse rhetorical questions (488, 489–90, 492, 496, 496–8) convey this. From line 500, however, when Jocasta's initial purpose has been achieved, the tone and tempo change, as she bewails the consequences of Polyneices' exile (500–25). The mention of Polyneices' warlike purpose in coming to Thebes (522–5) brings Jocasta to the central theme of her speech: why Polyneices should not wage war against his own city (525–83). She twists and turns in her argumentation with the skill of a seasoned declaimer. First, she presents the moral argument, that it is a *nefas* for two brothers to wage war against each other and for Polyneices to be

attacking his own city (526–7). Then she proceeds to the pragmatic – why destroy a city and its fields which you hope to make your own (557–65)? (Seneca does not allow her to linger over this, lest, no doubt she appear to undermine her moral argument.) From here she advances to the supernatural argument – the walls of Thebes were built by quasi-divine means: how could Polyneices dare to breach them without fear (565–71)? Finally, she resorts to emotional pressure, calling on Polyneices to imagine men like his father (572), unmarried girls (perhaps intended to recall his sisters) (575), and his mother herself (578), being roughly treated and led off into captivity.

480 Redde-482 One must imagine Polyneices reluctantly to have removed his helmet and sheathed his sword, while darting anxious glances at Eteocles, who is still fully armed.

481 astringe galeam Seneca was apparently envisaging a Roman helmet, which was tied on by a strap passing from the neck guard under the ears and through the cheek pieces (see Warry, *Warfare*, 136). Greek helmets (apart from the *pilos*, which came into vogue in the late fifth century BC, particularly in the Peloponnese) seem usually not to have been tied on to the head (*ibid.*, 44). There is a reference in Hom. *Il.* 3.371 to Paris' helmet strap, but as G.S. Kirk (*The Iliad: A Commentary (Books 1–4)* (Cambridge, 1985), 319) points out, this is unique in Homer and perhaps explains the 'slightly ponderous' verse which follows in explanation.

laeua se clipeo inserat *E* reads *inserat*, while all the MSS belonging to A read *ingerat*, with the exception of δ, which reads *inferat*. The reading of δ would seem to be an attempt to correct *ingerat*, which cannot be right, since *ingerere se* (+ dative) means 'to fling/ thrust oneself into/ onto' (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 82.21 *se infestis ingerere mucronibus*) and never 'to grasp'. For the expression *manus inserere* (+ dative), cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 2.671–2 *clipeoque sinistram/ insertabam*; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 169 *caeloque insereret uipereas manus* (*TLL* 7.1871.8–33).

483 Tu pone ferrum, causa qui ferri es prior The emphatic *tu* marks Jocasta's turning from Polyneices to Eteocles. Seneca's oblique reference to Eteocles as *causa qui ferri es prior* illustrates his fondness for antonomasia; cf. *Phoen.* 131 (of Oedipus) *saeua Thebarum lues* and see Canter, 127–8, for further examples in the dramas.

As Hirschberg notes *ad loc.*, Seneca's use of *prior* indicates that Jocasta does not regard Polyneices as completely free of responsibility for the war.

484 furere si bello placet The word order, with *furere* and *si* inverted, gives prominence to *furere* and Eteocles' un-Stoic *ira*. Almost all modern editors punctuate with a colon after *placet*, but a comma would seem to be sufficient; cf. 490, where the colon is appropriate.

485 indutias Most editors print *inducias*, but *indutias* (so Zwierlein, OCT) is probably correct. The word occurs elsewhere in the Senecan corpus only at *Cons. Marc.* 16.5, where it appears as *indutias*, but the form *inducias* is a common corruption in MSS (see *TLL* 7.1927.76–7).

486 ferat ut reuerso post fugam nato oscula The hyperbaton results from the need to have *oscula* at the end of the verse, so that *uel prima uel suprema* can have its full effect. *Fugam* here = *exilium*, as at Sen. *Med.* 192, 420, 492, and commonly in Ovid (see *TLL* 6.1465.74–1466.28). For *ferat . . . oscula*, a poetic periphrasis for the more prosaic *osculetur*, cf. Ov. *Met.* 7.729 *oscula ferrem*.

487 uel prima uel suprema There may be some intentional sound-play between *prima* and *–prema*. Jocasta's kisses will be the first ones (of many) if Polyneices and Eteocles are reconciled, or, failing a reconciliation, if Polyneices is victorious in the ensuing battle; if he is defeated, she will have embraced him for the last time.

488 ille te, tu illum times *Ille* = Polyneices, *te* = Eteocles.

489 ego utrumque, sed pro utroque *Sed pro utroque* stresses Jocasta's selflessness: despite her position of extreme danger, her fear is not for herself but for her sons. However, whereas the brothers' fear of each other is purely physical, Jocasta is concerned as much for their moral (see 450–7), as for their physical, well-being.

491–2 bellum . . . in quo est optimum/ uinci I.e. because no happiness can come from victory in an impious war; cf. 622–4 *id bellum gere/ in quo pater materque pugnanti tibi/ fauere possint*, 638–40 *quale tu hoc bellum putas,/ in quo execrandum uictor admittit nefas,/ si gaudet? Vinci*, which expresses the paradox that defeat is preferable to victory (see Hirschberg *ad loc.* for parallels), is prominently placed and is given additional emphasis by the coincidence of sense break and diaeresis.

The occurrence of *est* in a relative clause of characteristic is not unusual: the indicative is standard among early Latin authors and common in poetry of all periods; it is only in classical prose authors (Cicero being a notable exception) that the subjunctive is the rule (see LHS 2.559; KS 2.304–5).

492 uereris Seneca uses *uereor* only three times in his plays (cf. also *Phoen.* 495 and *Phaedr.* 217) (Denooz, 435), whereas he uses *timeo* 145 times (Denooz, 409–10) and *metuo* (Denooz, 226) forty-two times. The preference for *timeo* over *metuo* is characteristic of Silver Latin poets (Silius Italicus being a notable exception) (*TLL* 8.901.70–902.15), but the avoidance of *uereor* is not. In Statius, for example, *metuo* : *timeo* : *uereor* = 24 : 75 : 36, while in Lucan the ratio is 37 : 80 : 15. In the prose works Seneca does not markedly avoid using *uereor*, although he reveals the same preference for *timeo* over *metuo* as in the dramas: *metuo* : *timeo* : *uereor* = 48 : 272 : 37 (Busa and Zampolli).

493 fallere aut falli For the opposition of *fallere* and *falli*, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 3.3 *quidam fallere docuerunt, dum timent falli.*

494 patiare potius ipse quam facias scelus The idea is proverbial: cf. Plato *Grg.* 469C Εἰ δ'ἀναγκαῖον εἴη ἀδικεῖν ἢ ἀδικεῖσθαι, ἑλοίμην ἂν μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖσθαι ἢ ἀδικεῖν; Cic. *Tusc.* 5.56 *Nam cum accipere quam facere praestat iniuriam* (see Otto, *iniuria* 2 for further references). Hirschberg *ad loc.* notes, in addition, that the maxim occurs in Seneca also at *Ep.* 95.52 *ex illius* [sc. *natura*] *constitutione miserius est nocere quam laedi.*

495 ne uerere The construction has its origins in early Latin: on Verg. *Aen.* 544 *ne saeui*, Servius comments: *antiqua dictum est, nam nunc 'ne saeuias' dicimus.* The archaic feature is found commonly in poetry from Catullus onwards, but very seldom in prose (LHS 2.340; see Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 796 for further examples).

495–6 mater insidias et hinc/ et rursus illinc abiget Miller translates: 'thy mother will shield thee from snares on either hand', which makes little sense, if, as is logical after *uerere*, one takes 'thy' and 'thee' to be singular: Eteocles may fear treachery *illinc* (i.e. from Polyneices) but there is no reason why he should fear it *hinc* (i.e. from his own side). Rather, Jocasta, while addressing Eteocles, undertakes to protect both her sons – 'your (sing.) mother will ward off treachery both from this side [i.e. Eteocles' side] and then again from that'. There is a certain irony in the aged Jocasta's insistence that she will protect her young, strong sons from a treacherous attack.

For the weakened sense of *rursus*, cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.65 *alia . . . ratione maleuolus, alia amator, alia rursus anxius . . . corrigendus.*

With regard to *et hinc* (495), Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that in only four other cases does a Senecan verse end with two monosyllables:

Troad. 42 (*ad hoc*), *Med.* 125 (*in hanc*), *Phaedr.* 713 (*et hic*), *Phoen.* 234 (*quid hic*); in addition to these Drexler (*röm. Metr.*, 136) notes *Troad.* 56 and 475 (*sat est*).

496 exoro Sc. *uos.* For *exoro* used elliptically, cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 707 *numquam hercle hodie exorabis.* From undertaking to protect both her sons while addressing only Eteocles, Jocasta moves to address them both (cf. *uestro* 497).

496–7 an patri/ inuideo uestro I.e. because his blindness will not allow him to see his sons fighting. For the present indicative used instead of the deliberative subjunctive, cf. *Phoen.* 450 with note *ad loc.*

498 an ut uiderem propius = 'or to see it at closer quarters'. *Propius* is adverbial, rather than an adjective qualifying *nefas*: the comparative adverb is used with verbs of seeing, hearing, etc. to imply closer perception: cf., e.g., Hor. *Ep.* 1.1.67 *ut propius spectes lacrimosa poemata Pupi*; Sen. *Ep.* 30.9 *quam* [sc. *lancem Corinthiam*] *propius consideraret* (*OLD prope* 3a).

hic ferrum abdidit For the sudden change of direction in the middle of a verse, a declamatory characteristic of Senecan drama, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 1143, 1160; *Phaedr.* 684, 1196; *Thyest.* 901, 985; *Phoen.* 358. *Hic* must refer to Eteocles rather than to Polyneices, since it was Eteocles who had to disarm before Polyneices would do so; 500ff. are clearly addressed to the latter and *nunc* suggests that a condition has been fulfilled. Hirschberg (15–16) claims that it would be out of character for Eteocles to do what his mother asks here since he is entirely unyielding in the rest of the play. This argument is not convincing, however, for Eteocles' immovability with regard to the kingship is on a different level to his agreeing to put up his sword for a while. Just as *tu* (483) indicates Jocasta's turning from Polyneices to Eteocles, so *te* (500) marks Jocasta's turning from Eteocles to Polyneices. Moreover, Jocasta has just been addressing Eteocles and it would therefore be strange for her to refer not to him, but to Polyneices, as *hic* (cf. *hinc* (495), which clearly refers to Eteocles).

499 reclinis hastae parma defixae incubat *A* reads *recliuis hastae. et arma defixa incubant*, *E* reads *reclinis hastae arma defixa incubant.* Neither of these can be correct: even if one corrects *recliuis* to *reclinis* in *A*, the conjunction *et* makes no sense, while the version of *E* is metrically impossible. Gronovius' conjecture, *reclinis hastam et arma defixa incubans*, is not convincing, firstly, because it throws the emphasis onto

the inactivity of the man, rather than that of his weapons, and secondly, because *reclinis* never takes an accusative and *incubo* does so only very rarely (*TLL* 7.1061.61–2 gives only two comparable examples). Leo emended to *reclinis hasta est, arma defixa incubant,* which appeals because it demands very little alteration of *E.* However, it is debatable whether a weapon that is *defixa* can be said to 'lie idle'. In addition, 'lie idle', the sense demanded by the context for *incubo,* does not seem to be attested elsewhere (*TLL* 7.1061.71). W. Morel's conjecture ('On Some Passages in the Tragedies of Seneca' *AJPh* 64 (1943), 94–7 at 96), *reclinis hastae parma defixae incubat,* is ingenious. It poses no problems of syntax or usage, and it finds a precedent in Verg. *Aen.* 12.130 *defigunt tellure hastas et scuta reclinant.* The alterations to the MSS which it demands, although several, are not difficult: once the *p* of *parma* had dropped out, the other changes would follow naturally.

500 ad te I.e. Polyneices (see on *hic* 498).

preces nunc, nate, maternas feram Periphrases like *preces fero* (= *precor*), *osculum fero* (= *osculor*), and *pedem fero* (= *eo*) are confined almost exclusively to poetry (see *TLL* 6.542. 41ff). There is, however, a prosaic equivalent of *preces fero*: *preces adhibeo* (see *TLL* 1.649.39–43). For *preces fero,* cf. Verg. *Aen.* 8.60 *Iunoni fer rite preces*; Ov. *Pont.* 2.10.40 *ad aequoreos uota tulisse deos*; Val Fl. 4.547–8 *ille ducem nec ferre preces nec dicere passus/ amplius.* For *preces maternas,* cf. Sen. *Contr.* 6.6 *materna uerba*; Val. Max. 1.84 *maternas preces.* The periphrasis here enables Seneca to use the emotive adjective, *maternas* (effectively juxtaposed with *nate*), and also to add *sed ante lacrimas* without a change of verb.

500–1 feram lacrimas Cf. Sen. *Troad.* 1168 *quo meas lacrimas feram?*

501 sed ante lacrimas The association of tears with prayers is commonplace, especially in the context of the law courts: cf. Cic. *Sull.* 19 *numquam . . . illius lacrimis ac precibus restituissem*; Liv. 2.40.2 *mulieres precibus lacrimisque defenderunt*; Ov. *Her.* 4.175 *addimus his precibus lacrimas quoque* (also Cic. *Flacc.* 106, *Clu.* 22; Verg. *Aen.* 4.314, 12.56; Ov. *Her.* 10.148; Sen. *Contr.* 10.1.7). Seneca uses *sed ante lacrimas* to introduce Jocasta's lament about Polyneices' exile (for *lacrimae* used with the sense of 'lament', cf. Prop. 4.1.120 *incipe tu lacrimis aequus adesse nouis*). For *sed ante* introducing an additional thought, cf. Sen. *Med.* 576–7 *haec nostra nati dona nubenti ferant,/ sed ante diris inlita ac tincta artibus.*

longo tempore The ablative of duration of time, perhaps

an extension of the ablative of time during which, occurs, although very rarely, even in early Latin (cf. Plaut. *Mil.* 212; Ter. *Ad.* 520). There are scattered instances of it in later authors of the Republican period (so, e.g., Caes. *BG.* 1.26.5; Sall. *Iug.* 54.1; see further KS 1.360–1), and it becomes more common during the Empire (cf., e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 1.53; Suet. *Calig.* 59; see further KS 1.361, LHS 2.148). Instances in Seneca occur at *Helu.* 20.2 *omnibus saeculis*; *QN* 6.17.3 *non exiguo tempore*; *Clem.* 1.9.11 *diutius . . . quam duabus horis locutum esse constat*; *Troad.* 68–9 *continuis annis* and 1057–8 *bis quinis . . . annis* (and see A. Bourgery, *Sénèque Prosateur: Études littéraires et grammaticales sur la Prose de Sénèque le Philosophe* (Paris, 1922), 326).

501–2 teneo . . . ora Cf. E. *Ph.* 303–5 ἰὼ τέκνον,/ χρόνῳ σὸν ὄμμα μυρίαις τ'ἐν ἁμέραις/ προσεῖδον. Since Eteocles has disarmed (498–9), there is no reason for Polyneices to keep his helmet on, and one must assume that he has removed it while, or after, watching his brother set his arms aside. *Teneo ora* suggests that Jocasta is to be thought of as reaching up to cup Polyneices' face in her hands; on touching the face as a gesture of affection, especially towards children, see Sittl, *Gebärden*, 33–4.

502–3 profugum solo/ patrio penates regis externi tegunt Walter, 38–9, observes that in Senecan drama the *penates* are often mentioned in conjunction with *patria* (as at *Phoen.* 502, 553, 663) or, as here, with some variant thereof. He suggests: 'Das mag seinen Grund in der Existenz der penates populi Romani haben, deren Kult eine auf die römische Staatsebene transponierte Analogieform des privaten Haus– und Herdkultes darstellte'.

For a comparison between Euripides' and Seneca's treatment of Polyneices' exile, see E. Doblhofer, *Exil und Emigration* (Darmstadt, 1987), 163–6.

503 externi The adjective seems to have a hostile overtone, as at Verg. *Aen.* 6.93–4 *causa mali tanti coniunx iterum hospita Teucris/ externique iterum thalami.*

504 te maria tot diuersa, tot casus uagum *A* reads *tot diuersa*, *E* reads *tot tam diuersa*, *tam* being an obvious gloss. Scholars have been tempted to emend the verse, more because they find its sense unsatisfactory than because of textual difficulties. The problem lies in *maria tot diuersa.* As Heinsius (*Aduers.*, 57) put it: *Argos inter et Thebas errarat Polynices, quomodo ergo tot maribus actus?* He suggested *Te maria quam*

diuersa, quot . . . , which does not help matters much, or *Tene arua tot diuersa*. Bothe proposed *Te amara tot diuersa* (*amara* as in Hor. *Od.* 2.16.26); Bentley favoured *te fata tot diuersa*, and Herrmann offered *tot uaria, tot diuersa, tot* . . . . Of these possibilities, the conjecture of Bothe seems the most plausible (*te amara* contracting through elision to *temara*, and thence becoming *te maria*), but whether the verse requires emendation at all is doubtful. Certainly, *maria tot diuersa* is hyperbolic: indeed, Polyneices need not have travelled by sea at all to get from Thebes to Argos (cf. Stat. *Theb.* 1.324–5, where Polyneices reaches Argos via the Isthmus of Corinth). However, the notion that the sea-voyages of reluctant or unhappy or fate-driven travellers must be both long and difficult is a topos which surely has its origin in Odysseus' troubled wanderings and should not be taken too literally (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.31–2 *multosque per annos/ errabant acti fatis maria omnia circum*; Ov. *Trist.* 1.5.61–2 *nos freta sideribus totis distantia mensos/ sors tulit* . . .).

505–6 non te duxit in thalamos parens/ comitata primos Seneca here uses *parens* instead of the more emotive *mater*, perhaps *metri gratia*. He adapts the traditional *deductio* of the *bride* by her mother to her new husband's house: Hirschberg *ad loc.* compares Ov. *Her.* 8.96, where Hermione says: *intraui thalamos matre parante nouos.*

Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 126) invites a comparison between *in thalamos* . . . *primos* and Stat. *Theb.* 2.255–6 *primosque solebant/ excusare toros.* In the latter expression, *primos* . . . *toros* clearly means 'first marriage-bed', a euphemism for the first act of sexual intercourse, since the context is one in which young girls, about to be married, are performing a last rite to the virgin goddess, Pallas. Here, however, it is not particularly appropriate to ascribe the sense of 'first' to *primos*, since an insistence that this is Polyneices' first marriage (implying that further marriages will follow?) or his first act of sexual intercourse (hardly significant, or even likely, in the case of a male) would be strained in the context. Rather, *in thalamos primos* = 'the threshold of the bedroom': cf., e.g., Cic. *Fam.* 3.6.2 *te in prima prouincia uelle esse, ut quam primum decederes*; Verg. *Aen.* 1.541 *bella cient primaque uetant consistere terra*; Ov. *Her.* 4.8 *ter in primo destitit ore sonus* (*OLD primus* 10b).

Comitata = *comitans*; on the present sense of perfect participles of deponent verbs, see LHS 2.391.

506–7 nec sua festas manu/ ornauit aedes Following a logical train of thought from *thalamos primos*, *festas aedes* probably refers to the bridegroom's home rather than the bride's, where the wedding

feast would have been held. There is no ancient evidence of a tradition whereby the bride's mother herself adorned the bridegroom's house; Seneca is creating an imaginary scenario in order to stress the extent to which Jocasta has been left out of Polyneices' life. It is striking that this vignette of imagined but normal marriage comes from Jocasta, whose own marriage to Oedipus was so bizarre; see further on 623–4.

507–8 sacra . . . uitta Leo's emendation to *sacra* of *sua*, found in all the MSS, corrects an obvious error of reduplication influenced by *nec sua* in 506. There is no external evidence to support the notion that the bridegroom's mother used her own headband to bind together the nuptial torches. *Vitta sacra* was a technical term for the woollen band, which had a recognised use in a variety of religious rituals, including marriage ceremonies (D&S 5.950–7); see further Hirschberg *ad loc.*

508–9 dona non auro graues/ gazas socer, non arua, non urbes dedit *E* reads *dona non auro graues galeas socer*, *A* has *dona non auro et graues gazas socer.* Even if one emends the *auro* of *A* to *auri* (so Gronovius), the resultant reading is unsatisfactory, since *graues gazas* is weak. In support of *auro graues* (*E*), Bothe cites Verg. *Aen.* 1.728–9 *hic regina grauem gemmis auroque poposcit/ . . . pateram.* But *gazas* of *A* is preferable to *galeas* of *E*: *galeas* is too specific and thus incongruous.

The dowry system is attested as early as Homer (*Il.* 9.147, 289, 22.50; *Od.* 7.314) and bride-price is also mentioned (see E.M. Craik, 'Marriage in Ancient Greece' in *Marriage and Property* ed. E.M. Craik (Aberdeen, 1984), 11); the two systems seem to have co-existed throughout the classical Roman period (for details, see J.A Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London, 1967), 104–5). Whether Seneca was thinking of Polyneices in Greek or Roman terms, he would ordinarily, as the son of a king and co-ruler of Thebes, have been able to expect a handsome dowry; as a penniless exile, however, he was in no position to make demands (cf. also *Phoen.* 372–3).

510 dotale bellum est Cf. Manil. 914–15 *resistabant Actia bella/ dotali commissa acie*; for similar sarcasm in Senecan drama, cf. *Med.* 489 *hac dote nupsi* with Costa's note. The implication here is that Adrastus promised military support to Polyceices if the latter would marry his daughter. Seneca does not explain why Adrastus wanted Polyneices as a son-in-law; in E. *Ph.*, we learn that Adrastus regarded the marriage of his daughters to Polyneices and Tydeus, another exile,

as the fulfillment of an oracular command by Apollo (408–23) (so also Stat. *Theb.* 1.395–400).

510 hostium . . . 513 exul The asyndeta suggest Jocasta's highly tense and emotional state. The climax is reached with the paradox, *sine crimine exul.* For the build-up, cf. *Phoen.* 340–7.

511 patria remotus Polyneices lives remote from Thebes both literally, in terms of distance, and figuratively, because of his marriage to a foreign bride. For the figurative use of *remotus*, cf., e.g., Cic. *Off.* 1.63 *scientia, quae est remota ab iustitia*; Lucr. 5.125 *quid sit uitali motu sensuque remotum* (*OLD remotus* 3a).

hospes alieni laris *Laris* here, where Polyneices' relationship to his fatherland is the issue, would appear to be a reference to the *Lar* as the tutelary deity of the state, rather than of the home (see *OLD Lar* 1c). On the *Lares* in Senecan drama, see Walter, 36–7, and note on 344. The fact that Polyneices does not belong to Argos is stressed by the juxtaposition of *hospes* and *alieni*; cf. *Phoen.* 587 *gentis hospes externae.*

512 externa consecutus, expulsus tuis The chiasmus allows emphasis to fall on *expulsus* as the first word after the caesura. *Externa consecutus* is vague enough to encompass both the notion of an alien bride and that of foreign military aid. The sound-play between *-utus* and *-ulsus* is effective.

512–13 expulsus tuis,/ sine crimine exul Jocasta's bias towards Polyneices, which she admits in 384–5, is very apparent here (cf. also 483 *causa qui ferri es prior*).

513–14 ne quid e fatis tibi/ desset paternis From *quid* it is clear that when Jocasta designates Polyneices as 'an exile who has committed no crime', she is thinking at the same time of Oedipus, who, likewise, became an exile (although *his* exile was self-imposed) without, to her mind, being guilty of a crime (cf. 452–3 *omne Fortunae fuit/ peccantis in nos crimen*).

One would expect *desit*, rather than *desset*, here. Perhaps Seneca was influenced to use the imperfect subjunctive by the perfect infinitive in the noun clause, *errasse thalamis*, or perhaps *desset* depends on a *constructio ad sensum*, since the main clause is equivalent to *errauisti thalamis.*

515 errasse thalamis The comparison between Polyneices' marriage and that of Oedipus is not a very good one: the error of marriage

to a foreign bride, whose father has provided no conventional dowry, is not really comparable to that of a man who has unwittingly committed incest by marrying his mother. The point is, however, that in Jocasta's view they both went disastrously wrong in marriage, and the comparison conveys the strength of her reaction against Polyneices' marriage: she dislikes it so much that she ranks it with the incestuous marriage of Oedipus.

515–16 Nate post multos mihi/ remisse soles *E* omits this clause entirely, probably as the result of a scribal error caused by the recurrence of *nate* in the following verse in exactly the same position in the line. For emphatic repetition of this kind, cf. 309–10 *sola*, 318–19 *iubente te*, 455–6 *si*, 522–3 *nempe*, 527–8 *nefas*.

Soles = *dies*; the poetic word lends grandeur to the phrase and *post multos . . . dies* would sound rather weak in the context. *Sol* can, of course, refer to the passing of seasons or of a year (*OLD sol* 3), but used thus it does not occur without an explanatory phrase or epithet.

516 suspensae *E* reads *suspensae*, *A sollicite* (on *-ae* and *-e* in *E* and *A*, see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 363). In favour of *suspensae*, it is the *lectio difficilior*, and *sollicitae* would result in an unharmonious jingle with *soles*.

516–17 metus/ et spes This is explained in the verses which follow: Jocasta has longed to see Polyneices, but his presence brings with it the fear of war. On *metus* and *spes* applied to a person, see Hirschberg *ad loc.* who observes that although *spes* is commonly used thus, *metus* is used in this way for the first time in Seneca (cf. *Med.* 516–17 *Est et his maior metus/ Medea*).

518 semper rogaui The use of the perfect here, rather than the imperfect, relegates Jocasta's prayers to a fact of the past: their long duration is not stressed since their object has been achieved.

520 quando The final *-o* is short, as commonly in Silver Latin: cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 673; *Thyest.* 59 (*ecquando*); [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1531, 1769, 1771 (in *Med.* 870, *Troad.* 298, *Thyest.* 82, [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1766 it is long). On shortened final *-o* in Senecan drama as a criterion for dating, see Fitch (1981), 303–5.

pro te Jocasta is telling Polyneices what she asked; hence the *pro illo/ eo* of her original question becomes *pro te* when she is relating it to Polyneices.

521–2 dixit inridens deus:/ 'ipsum timebis' For a deity who mocks the plight of a mortal, cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.523–4, where Juno laughs in scorn at the frenzied Ino as she calls on Bacchus for help; for mocking Fortune, cf. Liv. 30.30.5, Juv. 3.40). The god's response is clearly unsollicited by Jocasta, since her question in 520–1 is addressed, rhetorically, to Polyneices (cf. *pro te* 520).

For *irrideo/inrideo* used elliptically, cf., e.g., Plaut. *Most.* 1132 *uerbero, etiam irrides?*; Cic. *Verr.* 4.148 *qui illic eius modi est ut . . . omnes cum loqui coepit irrideant* (*OLD irrideo* 1d).

Ipsum timebis = '[You will cease to be afraid *for* him when] you begin to be afraid *of* him'.

522–3 foret . . . fores In Senecan drama *essem* occurs six times, *forem* eight (Denooz). Seneca, unlike Propertius and Ovid, does not use *forem* as a word of future meaning: it seems to occur *metri gratia* for *essem*, since in seven out of the eight instances (*Phaedr.* 196, 1243; *Phoen.* 271, 522, 523; *Agam.* 184; *Thyest.* 512) it is found at the end of a verse where an iambus is required, and in the eighth (*Oedip.* 297) it occurs in the fourth foot, where a spondee would not be permitted. On *forem* and *esse,* see W.D Lowrance, 'The Use of *forem* and *essem*' *TAPhA* 62 (1931), 169–91.

522 ipsum . . . 524 carerem Jocasta can either have Polyneices and war, or neither war nor Polyneices (Jakobi, *Einfluss*, 44, compares Ov. *Met.* 8.44–6). Her dilemma is neatly summed up in these two well-balanced clauses: *nempe* and *carerem* frame each clause, appearing in the same position in the line in each case; *foret* is balanced by *fores*; *ego te* and *bello*, the significant words in the respective clauses, are each placed prominently at the beginning of a verse.

Hirschberg *ad loc.* compares Scylla's words in Ov. *Met.* 8.44–6):

'laeter,' ait 'doleamne geri lacrimabile bellum,
in quo dubio est; doleo, quod Minos hostis amanti est,
sed nisi bella forent, numquam mihi cognitus esset;

also Veturia's words to Coriolanus at Liv. 2.40.8: *ergo ego nisi peperissem, Roma non oppugnaretur; nisi filium haberem, libera in libera patria mortua essem.*

524–5 triste conspectus datur/ pretium tui durumque The hyperbaton results in the placing of the two emotive adjectives, *triste* and *durum*, in emphatic positions at the beginning and at the end of the clause.

Possessive adjectives, like *tui* here, through attraction or assimilation frequently replace the objective genitives *mei*, *tui*, *sui*, *nostri*, *uestri*, *sui*:

cf. Plaut. *Trin.* 278 *me aps tuo conspectu occultabo*; Sen. *Ben.* 4.11.3 *in conspectum nostrum reuersurus*, and see KS 1.599.

Conspectus is more common in prose than in poetry (see *TLL* 4.489.60ff.): it is not found elsewhere in Senecan tragedy, although it occurs freely in the prose works (see Busa and Zampolli 1.203).

525 sed . . . 527 audet The transition from *sed matri placet* to *Hinc modo recedant arma* etc. is somewhat awkward: with *sed matri placet*, Jocasta implies that it is worth having to endure war to see Polyneices, yet her urgent plea, in the very next line, for Polyneices to withdraw his troops, undermines the effect of this display of maternal love. This sudden change of heart in Jocasta suggests her inner turmoil. The presence of *modo* (= 'only'), common in commands or requests, increases, rather than reduces, the awkwardness, since it stresses the contradiction.

526 Hinc modo recedant arma, dum *Arma* = *armati*; so also Sen. *Oedip.* 731–2 *feta tellus/ . . . effudit arma*, *Troad.* 182–3 *Threicia . . . arma . . ./strauit* (for *arma* used thus by other authors, see *TLL* 2.600.44–601.44).

On the restrictive use of *dum* (= 'while still'), see on 450–1.

527–8 hoc quoque est magnum nefas,/ tam prope fuisse For the structure of the sentence, cf. 514–15 *hoc quoque ex illis habes,/ errasse thalamis*, where, however, *quoque* has the sense of 'also', rather than, as here, of 'even'. With *tam prope fuisse* sc. *ea*, referring back to *arma.*

528 et exanguis tremo Paleness is a conventional accompaniment to fear: cf., e.g., Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 414 *Gelidus per artus uadit exanguis tremor*; Stat. *Theb.* 3.361 *trepidi exsanguesque metu*; Apul. *Met.* 9.27 *exangui pallore trepidantem puerum* (*TLL* 5.1825.73–1826.13). On the ὁμοείδεια which characterises Seneca's descriptions of unpleasant emotions, see Canter, 176–7.

529 cum stare fratres hinc et hinc uideo duos Word order aids sense: the separation of *fratres* and its accompanying adjective, *duos*, by *hinc et hinc* reinforces the notion of the brothers' being on opposite sides.

Cum here could be explicatory (= *quod*), explaining *why* Jocasta is stunned and shaking (528) (cf., e.g., Plaut. *Most.* 1128 *saluos quom aduenis . . . gaudeo*; Lucil. 1015 *gaudes, cum differs*; Apul. *Apol.* 13 *habeo gratiam, cum . . . audis*, and see KS 2.328–31, 346–7; LHS 2.624–5 on *cum* explicatory and *cum* causal). *Cum* could also be determinative, i.e.

'. . . I tremble *when* I see . . .' (cf., e.g., Cic. *Diu.* 2.3 *sex libros de re publica tunc scripsimus, cum gubernacula rei publicae tenebamus*, and see LHS 2.622).

For *hinc et hinc*, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1211, *Thyest.* 591, 735, 1013; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 947, 1018, 1135 (contrast *hinc atque hinc* at Sen. *Phoen.* 393, *Med.* 343); in other authors, see *TLL* 6.2804.55–62.

530 sceleris sub ictu *Ictus* is used figuratively here in an unusual way: it refers not to a misfortune which has already occurred or is in the process of occurring (so Cic. *Agr.* 2.8 *sublata erat . . . fides non ictu aliquo nouae calamitatis*; also Ov. *Pont.* 2.7.41; Sen. *QN.* 2.59.2), but to one which is about to take place; i.e. *ictu* here = *periculo.* The image is of Crime, who brings culpability, poised to strike; hence, one might translate the phrase as 'under the threat of guilt'. The only true parallel to this use of *ictus* seems to be Luc. 5.729–30 *quod nolles stare sub ictu/ Fortunae, quo mundus erat Romanaque fata.* Contrast Sen. *Thyest.* 645, where the expression *sub ictu* suggests a state of subjection rather than one of imminent disaster.

membra quassantur metu Cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 1034 *os quassat tremor*; *Troad.* 623 *Reliquit animus membra, quatiuntur, labant. Quasso*, the frequentative form of *quatio*, is more forceful than *quatio* and suggests continuous or repeated shaking or trembling.

531–2 Cf. 535 *quod paene uidi* and Hor. *Od.* 2.13.21–2 *quam paene . . ./ uidimus* with NH *ad loc.*

Maius . . . nefas quam quod recalls Oedipus' desire at 353–4 for *maiusque quam quod . . ./ aliquid.* Here, as at 272–3, the fraternal conflict is regarded as a greater evil than incest, which is presumably what is referred to in *quam quod miser uidere non potuit pater* (Seneca could hardly have had Oedipus' parricide in mind here, for, since Laius is dead, Oedipus would not have had to look at him subsequently). There is no suggestion in other treatments of the legend that Oedipus blinded himself to avoid having to see Jocasta again; the conceit appears to be uniquely Senecan and characteristic of declamation's striving for effect.

Potuit here = 'could bear'; for this sense of *possum*, found also at 579–80 *potesne ciues leto et exitio datos/ uidere passim?*, see *OLD possum* 3.

533–5 In 531, Jocasta's shaking limbs are accounted for by the fact that the battle has almost become a reality and may still do so; in 533–5, she says that even if she may now be free from anxiety about the battle (since, by implication, it is no longer likely to take place),

nevertheless she is unhappy *quod paene uidi*, i.e. because of the situation which produced the possibility of the impious war.

535 per . . . 538 parentis The three elements of the tricolon, on which Jocasta bases her appeal, have been cleverly chosen and arranged. On the surface, Jocasta is simply urging Polyneices to think of what his war-mongering will mean to his family. However, the association of Jocasta's pregnancy with Antigone's devotion and Oedipus' self-mutilation is also a reminder of the tainted relationships which provide the backdrop against which the warring of the brothers must be set.

535 decem mensum Franz Bömer (*P. Ovidius Naso: Die Fasten*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 1958)) on Ov. *Fast.* 1.33 observes that, although ancient opinion was divided as to whether birth occurred *in* the tenth month or *after* ten months, the figure ten was usually associated with the gestation period (he cites as exceptions Ov. *Pont.* 11.45–6, *Met.* 2.453, 10.295–6, 10.479; Cic. *ND.* 2.69 where birth is said to occur within the ninth month or after it; to these one might add also Tert. *Carn. Christ.* 41.6 and Amm. 14.11.22). He comments, further, that it is not clear why pregnancy should be associated by both Greeks and Romans with a period of ten months (since, observably, it did not normally last that long). He suggests, plausibly, that it may refer to ten lunar months (i.e. forty weeks), which would include ten menstrual periods, since gestation is not uncommonly referred to in terms of the moon, or, less frequently, of missed menstrual periods. A.S. Pease (*M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum Libri III*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt, 1968)) on Cic. *ND.* 2.69 cites other views: that the Romans counted the months inclusively, so that ten-month pregnancies were in fact simply full-term, nine-month gestations; that ten ancient lunar months are equal to ten solar ones (he gives extensive references to nine- and ten-month pregancies).

535–6 per decem mensum graues/ uteri labores For the genitive of quality, *mensum*, cf. Ov. *Met.* 8.500 *bis mensum quinque labores. Uteri* is a subjective genitive. *Labor(es)*, in the context of childbearing, usually refers, like its English derivative, to the suffering involved in the actual process of giving birth (see *TLL* 7.792.46–63); here, however, Seneca applies it loosely to the suffering involved in the entire gestation period. Cf. the example from Ovid cited above, where, similarly, *labores* refers to the whole pregnancy.

536–7 perque pietatem inclitae/ precor sororis The reading of *A*, *perque pietate inclitas . . . sorores*, appears to be the work of an interpolator who was unhappy about Seneca's failure to include Ismene in his play. It does not seem likely that Seneca himself, having ignored Ismene's existence up to now, would at this point have introduced her for no good reason, and even more unlikely for him to have presented her, hitherto unmentioned, as a sister 'famous for her *pietas*'. The version of E, as Zwierlein points out (*Krit. Komm.*, 126), aptly recalls Antigone's devotion to her father, which is well attested in the first part of the play. On the question of Ismene, see further on 551.

537–8 per irati sibi/ genas parentis Jocasta assumes, ironically, that Oedipus shares her love for Thebes and for her sons (cf. also 552–5, 623). The fact that the audience knows better than Jocasta what Oedipus' true feelings are, stimulates an awareness of the great gulf that has grown between husband and wife.

538 genas *Genae* in the sense of *oculi* is found only among the poets, and is especially favoured by Statius (see *TLL* 6.1767.63–84). It is used thus in Senecan drama also at *Herc. Fur.* 531, 767; *Phaedr.* 364; *Troad.* 441, 1138; *Agam.* 726.

538–9 scelere quas nullo nocens,/ erroris a se dura supplicia exigens Again *scelus* and *error* are opposed (see on 203–15, 451–4), the two concepts being given prominence by their respective positions – *scelere* at the beginning of the clause and *erroris* starting a verse. By expressing Oedipus' lack of a crime in negative terms, Seneca introduces the word *nocens*, and thus manages to suggest Oedipus' paradoxical sense of guilt despite his legal blamelessness; cf. 218 and see note *ad loc.*

540 hausit The impact of *hausit* is increased by its separation from *quas* by the parenthesis, [*scelere*] . . . *nullo nocens* . . . *exigens*, and by its position as the first word in the verse and the last in the clause. Seneca possibly had in mind Ovid's description of Hecuba's blinding of Polymestor at *Met.* 13.564, where Hecuba, having gouged out her victim's eyeballs, is said to have dragged out his actual eye-sockets, *loca luminis haurit*, as well. This seems to be the only other instance of *haurio* used with reference to the eyes.

nefandas *Nefandas* here = 'impious', rather than simply 'wicked' or 'dreadful' (as in Verg. *Aen.* 2.155–6 *uos arae ensesque nefandi,/*

quos fugit): an assault on Thebes by a stranger might be 'wicked', but Polyneices' attack on Thebes is an offence against the divinely-sanctioned bonds of *pietas*, both the *pietas* owed to the family and that due to one's city. Cf. Liv. 1.59.10 *inuecta corpori patris nefando uehiculo filia*, where, likewise, *nefandus* has a strong religious sense.

541 bellici = *bellicosi*; so Prop. 3.14.13–14 *Amazonidum . . . bellica/ . . . turba*; Sen. *Phaedr.* 550 *bellicus Mauors*, but contrast Sen. *Agam.* 547 *non me fugauit bellici terror dei*, where *bellici* is used strictly, to designate Mars as the god *of war*.

542 ut *Ut* here is concessive (as *tamen* makes clear) and = 'even if'. The concessive use of *ut*, often without *tamen*, goes back as far as Terence, where one instance is attested (*Hec.* 296); it is rare in poetry and particularly common in Cicero (see KS 2.251; LHS 2.647).

542–3 magna pars sceleris tamen/ uestri peracta est Cf. 527–8 *hoc quoque est magnum nefas,/ tam prope fuissse*, Sen. *Troad.* 594–5 *magna pars sceleris mei/ olim peracta est.* P.H. Damsté's conjecture ('Ad Senecae Phoenissas' *Mnemosyne* 47 (1919), 73–6 at 76), *uasti* for *uestri*, on the grounds that the plural is unjustified since Polyneices alone is being addressed, is unnecessary. *Vester* is not generally used in Senecan drama simply as a substitute, *metri gratia*, for the singular, *tuus* (unlike *noster* and *meus*); the only instance of its being used thus may be at *Troad.* 701 (where, however, Penelope, Laertes, and the Greeks could be included). It is found, however, as a 'plural of respect', when a god or individual worthy of honour is referred to or addressed, as at [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1909 *Ubi nunc uestrae, Iuppiter, arces?* (perhaps also 956, 1513), and, as here, when there is an implication of plurality: although Jocasta is specifically addressing Polycneices and it is his guilt to which she is referring, the *scelus* is not restricted to him alone, since Eteocles shares the responsibility. Cf. 496–7, where Jocasta is addressing only Polyneices when she refers to Oedipus, but, since Oedipus is the father of both brothers, she calls him *patri . . . uestro*; *Troad.* 532–3, where Ulysses, addressing Andromache, refers to Astyanax as *natus . . . uester*, *uester* being used rather than *tuus* because the boy is the child of both Andromache and Hector.

543 hostili grege = 'by a hostile mob'. *Grex*, like *cateruae* in 58 (see note *ad loc.*), is contemptuous, being a term which a Roman would use to describe an enemy army but never his own disciplined forces (cf. *exercitus* 550). It is not used elsewhere in this sense in Senecan

drama, but cf. Cic. *Dom.* 24 *cum grege praedonum impurissimo*; Hor. *Epod.* 16.37 *pars indocili melior grege.*

544–5 fulgentes procul/ armis cateruas uidit *Procul* must be taken closely with *fulgentes* – 'gleaming from afar': the enemy troops are now close at hand, but their shining weapons were sighted from far away as they approached (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 8.92–3 *fulgentia longe/ scuta*).

Armis is an ablative of respect: cf. Verg. *Aen. 8.593 fulgentis aere cateruas*; Hor. *Od.* 1.7.19–20 *fulgentia signis/ castra. Fulgeo* is regularly used to describe the gleaming of weapons: it occurs most often in poetry, but not infrequently also in prose writers (see *TLL* 6.1510.12–27). The present participle, especially, is favoured in such contexts (see *TLL* 6.1513.29–38).

545–6 equitatu leui/ Cadmea frangi prata Cf. 396 *equestri fracta . . . tellus pede* and see note *ad loc. Prata* is more specific than *tellus*: it suggests that the grazing lands have been trampled by the horsemen (this is more fully described in 560–1).

546–7 excelsos rotis/ uolitare proceres Cf. Manil. 1.362–3 *Heniochus . . . / quem . . . curru uolitantem . . . alto.* Just as the language which Seneca uses to describe the forces coming against Thebes is the sort of language a Roman would use of an army of Rome's enemies but not a Roman army (see on 58 and 543), so also the fact that the leaders are said to ride about in chariots indicates that Seneca is not thinking of Polyneices' army in Roman terms. Rather, he appears to be envisaging it as a Homeric army (chariots were last used in Greek warfare in Homeric times) or, possibly, as a contemporary barbarian force, since the Britons, one of Rome's most persistent enemies, used chariots as late as the third century AD (Warry, *Warfare*, 164).

Rotis = curru, pars pro toto; so Ov. *AA.* 2.230 *si rota defuerint, tu pede carpe uiam*; Mart. 10.104.5–8 *illinc te rota tollet et citatus/ altam Bilbilin/ . . . / uidebis.*

548 igne flagrantes trabes *Trabs* here is no more than a synonym for *fax*, although elsewhere in Senecan drama it indicates something larger than an ordinary torch: cf. *Herc. Fur.* 103 [*Megaera*] . . . *uastam rogo flagrante corripiat trabem* (with Fitch *ad loc.*) and possibly also *Med.* 962, where, again, the bearer of the *trabs* is Megaera.

For the pleonasm, cf. Sen. *Cons. Marc.* 19.4 *nec flumina igne flagrantia*; *Ep.* 115.4 *oculis uiuido igne flagrantibus.*

548 cineri quae petunt nostras domus Lit. = 'which seek our

homes for ash', i.e. 'which seek to reduce our homes to ash'. For the rare dative after *peto*, cf. Verg. *Georg.* 2.505 *hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penatis*; Sil. 2.29 *Hannibalem poenae petit impia tellus*; *in/ad* + accusative is the usual construction (see *OLD peto* 12).

549 facinus quod nouum et Thebis fuit As Hisrchberg *ad loc.* observes, there is, in fact, a legendary precedent for the battle between the brothers in the fighting among the Cadmeans, who sprang from the dragon's teeth: this is referred to in Sen. *Oedip.* 750 as *proelia fratrum.* The rhetorical insistence on the uniqueness of the crime enhances the horror of it, as at 264–5, where Oedipus' incest is said to be *facinus ignotum*; cf. also Cic. *Verr.* 5.189, where Verres' crimes are called *omnia . . . inaudita et singularia* (see *TLL* 6.81.44–5, 6.82.21).

549–50 fratresque . . . in se ruentes The catalogue of horrors to which Thebes has been a witness rises in a crescendo from the fields filled with enemy troops (543–4), through the farm lands which are being devastated by Polyneices' cavalry (545–6) and the firebrands which threaten the very homes of the Thebans (547–8), to the final abomination: two brothers attacking each other.

The phrase *fratresque . . . in se ruentes* is given sufficient prominence for one to suppose that Seneca intended his audience to recall Oedipus' wild wish, *frater in fratrem ruat* (355), a recollection which prompts, again, a comparison of the attitudes of Oedipus and Jocasta to the fraternal conflict.

550 exercitus The *exercitus* is Eteocles' army, which is defending Thebes. It is significant that this force is accorded the status of an *exercitus*, whereas Polyneices' troops are unflatteringly designated as a *hostilis grex* (543 and see note *ad loc.*). This reflects Jocasta's dilemma: her sympathies lie with Polyneices as an individual (see 383–6), but she is hostile to his troops who are attacking her city.

551 hoc populus omnis The reading of *A* is *et populus omnis. Hoc* of *E* is preferable because of the resultant triad, *hoc* (550) . . . *hoc* (551) . . . *hoc* (551), which adds force to the ascending tricolon.

uestraque hoc uidit soror *E* reads *utramque hoc uidit soror*, which is unacceptable both on metrical grounds and because the feminine accusative makes no sense. *A* has *et utraque* etc., which is metrically impossible. Peiper's emendation, *utraque*, has won universal acceptance, despite the obvious problem which it raises: that this is the sole reference in the play to Ismene (a similar reference to her by *A*

in 536–7 being generally dismissed; see note *ad loc.*), who otherwise, as far as Seneca is concerned, does not exist. This is not an insuperable obstacle to the acceptance of *utraque* (which is supported by *totus* (550) . . . *omnis* (551)) since it is no more than an untidy detail in a play that bristles with loose ends and one cannot rule out slight inconsistency on Seneca's part with regard to Ismene. However, it seems at least possible, even likely, that both the version of *E* and that of *A* result from a misreading of an unclear word in the archetype and that the word was not *utraque* but *uestraque* – an easy error, especially considering that *uestra* is regularly abbreviated in MSS to *ūra* (cf. the confusion in the MSS between *uris* and *uestris* in 560 and see note on 542–3).

552 genetrixque vidi Although there is MS consensus on *uidit*, Gronovius emended to *uidi*, an emendation which has been accepted by most modern scholars. Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 126) points out that although Jocasta could have referred to herself in the third person (he cites as parallels: Sen. *Troad.* 686; *Phaedr.* 1256, 1264; *Thyest.* 1040), the influence of the preceding elements in the catalogue, *totus hoc exercitus,/ hoc populus omnis, uestraque hoc uidit soror* (550–1), all of which are in the third person, may have resulted in the corruption of *uidi* to *uidit*. Certainly, *uidi* is rhetorically more effective.

The chiasmus in *uestraque hoc uidit soror/ genetrixque uidi* causes stress to fall on *genetrix*, a key-word, not only in the general context of Jocasta's maternal concern, but in the immediate context, since it prompts an explanation of why Oedipus, the father, cannot be included in the list of witnesses.

nam pater debet sibi *Nam* is explanatory and introduces Jocasta's reason for omitting Oedipus from her catalogue (= [I do not mention Oedipus] for . . .). It is not used thus elsewhere in Senecan drama, but cf. Sall. *Iug.* 102.11 . . . *numquam populum Romanum beneficiis uictum esse. Nam bello quid ualeat, tute scis* (where *nam* = [I do not speak of Roman achievements in the military sphere] for . . .) and Val. Fl. 4.692–3 *parsque . . . deprensa iugis; nam cetera caelo/ debita* (where *nam* = [only part of the ship was crushed by the crags] for . . .) (*OLD nam* 5).

Pater debet sibi seems a strange way to refer to Oedipus' self-inflicted blindness. Birt ((1879), 524) suggests that the reference may be also to Oedipus' voluntary exile; however, the concentration of words to do with sight – *uidit* (551), *uidi* (552), *spectauit* (553) – makes this unlikely. Perhaps Seneca deliberately and ironically uses *debeo* to recall the language of debt and repayment which expresses Oedipus' *libido*

moriendi in the first part of the play (cf. 90–3, 166–72).

553–4 Occurrat tibi/ nunc Oedipus = 'Let Oedipus now present himself to you [sc. in your imagination']; cf. Sen. *Suas.* 6.4 *Occurrat tibi Cato tuus cuius a te laudata mors est.*

Because Seneca uses the proper names of *dramatis personae* so sparingly, especially in *Phoen.* (see on *nata* 2), when the proper name of a character does appear, it has considerable impact. Oedipus' name is, in fact, the only one used in the play (cf. also 89, 178, 313), and this is the sole instance of its being used by another character; elsewhere it is used only by Oedipus himself. The effect of saying *nunc Oedipus* rather than, say, *pater tuus*, is to play down Oedipus' paternal, authoritative role (to which Jocasta appeals in 537–8), and to hold him up rather as a public figure, whose exacting moral standards should have a sobering effect on an impulsive young man about to plunge into *nefas.*

erroris *Erroris* should be taken with *poenae* rather than with *iudice*: i.e. not 'in whose judgement of his *error* punishment even is sought', but 'in whose judgement punishment, even for *error*, is sought'.

555 ne . . . erue For *ne* + imperative, see on 495. Seneca may be engaging in subtle use of language here. Jocasta has just mentioned Oedipus, who punished himself even for an *error*, the punishment being, of course, self-blinding. In the first part of *Phoen.*, Oedipus is dissatisfied with his punishment and twice uses *eruo* in the context of his dissatisfaction: in 179–8, he says *minus eruisti lumina audacter tua,/ quam praestitisti*, and in 227–9, lamenting the fact that he can still hear, he says [*utinam*] . . . *omne qua uoces meant/ aditusque uerbis tramite angusto patet/ eruere possem.* Both passages conjure up such gruesome images that they are not easy to forget. From speaking of Oedipus, then, with whom the idea of 'gouging out' is strongly connected, Jocasta passes on to plead with Polyneices, using, in her entreaty, the same verb (*eruo*). The self-blinding of Oedipus and the threatened overthrow of Thebes are thus intertwined – two links in the chain of inevitable self-destruction which binds the royal house of Thebes.

556 patriam et penates Cf. also 503 *(solo) patrio penates*, 663 *patriam, penates* and see on 502–3.

quas regere expetis There is no problem with *quas* of the MSS but Zwierlein (OCT) reads *quae*, which appears to be that it is a typographical error (although it reappears in the 1987 reprint). Viansino tentatively, and unnecessarily, suggests *qua.*

557 quis tenet mentem furor? *Quis*, the interrogative pronoun, is regularly used in poetry as an adjective (instead of *qui*) with masculine nouns in the nominative singular: cf. Verg. *Aen.* 10.9–10 *quis metus . . . / hos arma sequi . . . suasit?;* Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1138 *Quis hic locus, quae regio . . .?*; Stat. *Theb.* 9.70 *quis tuus hic, quis ab hoste cruor* (KS 1.655).

Just as Oedipus is characterised as the very antithesis of the Stoic sage by his *libido moriendi* (see on 77–9) and his *ira* (see on 163), so the *furor* of his sons (cf. also 289–90 *natos . . . grauiter furentes*, 352 *iuuenum furor*, 411 *feruidos iuuenes*) brands them also as incapable of reason and lacking control over their lives because of their surrender to passion.

558 petendo patriam perdis? The present tense used with future sense in non-deliberative questions is an uncommon feature of early Latin: cf. Plaut. *Pseud.* 1139 *equis hoc aperit?*; Ter. *And.* 301 *daturne illa Pamphilo hodie nuptum* (see Charles E. Bennett, *Syntax of Early Latin*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1910; repr. Georg Olms, 1966), 1.21–2. The alliteration is emphatic and the contraposition of *petendo* and *perdis* suggests that Seneca intended some play on the two senses of the former, 'seeking' (as opposed to *perdis*) and 'attacking' (which is the meaning demanded by the context).

Hirschberg *ad loc.* notes that the shortened *-o* of the ablative of the gerund is found also at Sen. *Oedip.* 942, *Troad.* 264; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1862.

For the idea that it would be madness to destroy the city one hopes to rule, cf. E. *Ph.* 70–9.

559 uis esse nullam For this use of *nullus* (= 'non-existent', 'destroyed'), cf. Sen. *Cons. Marc.* 19.5.10–11 *nec potest miser esse qui nullus est*, *Ep.* 99.30 *Utrum putas illi male esse, quod nullus est, an quod est adhuc aliquis?* (also *Cons. Polyb.* 9.3, *Ep.* 92.34, 102.4). In all these cases *nullus* is used of a person or people; for *nullus* used of the state, cf. Cic. *Att.* 14.13.6 *redeo . . . ad miseram seu nullam potius rem publicam.*

causae nocet The expression is prosaic: cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.38, *De Or.* 2.303, 330; Quint. *Inst.* 5.7.17 (*TLL* 3.695.20–1).

560 ipsum hoc quod armis uris infestis solum *Ipsum hoc* must be taken as the subject of *nocet*, rather than as an internal accusative (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6.694 *metui ne quid Libyae tibi regna nocerent*), with *quod* (= 'in that') introducing an explanatory clause: 'No, this very action harms your cause, in that you are burning the land with hostile weapons'.

561 segetes adultas sternis The reading of *E*, *adultas*, is far better than *adustas* of *A*: if the crops had already been burnt, it would hardly matter if they were subsequently flattened (*sternis*). *Adultas* implies that they were ripe and ready for harvesting when they were destroyed, which makes the loss far greater. For the expression *segetes adultas*, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 699 *nec adulta leni fluctuat Zephyro seges.*

561–2 fugam edis This expression does not appear to be found elsewhere in Latin literature and is somewhat strained, although the sense is clear: 'you inflict flight' = 'you cause people to flee'. The closest parallel would seem to be Verg. *Aen.* 10.602–3 *talia . . . edebat funera ductor/ Dardanius*, where however, the use of *edo* is less awkward.

562 nemo . . . 564 credis The sense of the *sententia* is: if you contemplate destroying Thebes and its territory, you cannot really believe that your claim to them is justified, since no man would destroy what he thinks is his own.

563 corripi igne = 'to be set on fire'. *Corripio* used of fire occurs most commonly in poetry in the classical period (see *TLL* 4.1044.20–54) for the more prosaic *incendo* (*TLL* 7.865.73–866.56). It is not, however, used thus elsewhere in Senecan drama.

quae meti gladio = 'to be mown down with the sword'. The metaphor from reaping is not uncommon in poetry (*TLL* 8.890.35–53); cf. esp. Verg. *Aen.* 10.513 *proxima quaeque metit gladio*, of which Seneca's phrase seems to be an echo.

564 aliena I.e. Eteocles'.

rex sit ex uobis uter By hyperbaton, Seneca places the most significant word, *rex*, at the beginning of the clause, where it gains additional weight from being the first word after the sense-break and caesura; the second most important word, *uter*, is given prominence by its position at the end of the verse (cf. 110 *sed uterque*). It is noteworthy that Jocasta says *sit* and not *futurus sit*: the brothers are not fighting about which of them is to be the king, but about which of them is presently the legitimate king in terms of their agreement.

565–6 haec telis petes/ flammisque tecta Cf. 547–8 *igne flagrantes trabes/ . . . cineri quae petunt nostras domos.* The prominence given to *haec* reflects Jocasta's horrified incredulity at Polyneices' intention to wage war against his own city.

All modern editors, with the exception of Zwierlein, read *petis* with *E* rather than *petes* (*A*). *Petes*, however, is almost undoubtedly correct:

it is the verb in the first of a series of rhetorical questions and the verbs of the following five questions (up to *trahet* 574) are all in the future; the present subjunctives, *eat* in 576 and *uehar* in 578, then ease the transition from future to present indicative, and the following four questions (up to *in iras pectus* 583) have their verbs in the present. The corruption of *petes* to *petis* is easily explained by assimilation to *telis* and *flammisque* which enclose it.

566 Amphionis See on 19–21. According to Homer, Amphion and Zethus jointly founded Thebes (cf. *Od.* 11.262–4 Ἀμφίονά τε Ζῆθόν τε,/ οἳ πρῶτοι Θήβης ἕδος ἔκτισαν ἑπταπύλοιο,/ πύργωσάν τ', . . . ; see also L.R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921), 212–16); Fitch (on Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 262–3) notes that in Roman poetry Zethus tends to be passed over. As Segal ('Dissonant Sympathy: Song, Orpheus and the Golden Age in Seneca's Tragedies' in *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama* ed. A.J. Boyle (Victoria, 1983), 230–1) observes, Amphion, like Orpheus, is a 'civilizing hero' and lines 566–71 contrast his creativity through song with Polyneices' warlike urge which threatens the destruction of Thebes. Seneca in *Phoen.*, suggests Segal, evokes the two sides of Thebes' past: Amphion stands for civilising order, whereas Zethus, Actaeon, Pentheus, and Ino represent violent death and bloodshed; he compares Sen. *Oedip.* 609ff. It is noteworthy that Seneca devotes more attention to the legendary figures of destruction (13–25) than he does to the gentle Amphion (cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 915–17, where no mention at all is made of Amphion).

567 moles *Moles* which implies a structure on a grand scale, makes the achievement of Amphion seem more impressive than, say, *murum* would. Furthermore, together with *quassare* (= 'to batter' but not 'to destroy'; on the force of *quassare,* see on 530), it suggests that the puny human resources at Polyneices' disposal would be of little avail against such an immense and almost magical fortification.

568–70 The noisy, laboured work of the crane stands in contrast to the musical ease of Amphion's achievement.

On ancient cranes of various kinds, cf. Vitr. 10.1.1–2, 10.2.1–11 and see J.P. Adam, *La Construction romaine* (Paris, 1984), chap. 2. Pease on Verg. *Aen.* 4.89, where, as here, the existence of cranes in the heroic age is assumed, notes that references to cranes occur also at Cic. *Verr.* 2.145, 2.147; Hor. *Sat.* 2.2.73; Suet. *Calig.* 57; Stat. *Silu.* 1.1.63–4.

568 tardum . . . onus Seneca seems to have made a mental leap from the wall as a whole to the stones of which it was comprised: *quas* still refers to *moles*, but when he speaks of moving the *tardum onus* with a crane, the *onus* of which he is thinking cannot be the entire wall but the individual *lapides*, to which he refers explicitly in 570. The expression *tardum . . . onus* may have been influenced by Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.101–2 *tardius irent/ propter onus.*

570 summas uenit in turres lapis The hyperbaton causes emphasis to fall on *lapis* and *summas*, thus highlighting the magnitude of Amphion's achievement.

In here = *usque ad*; it is a usage more common in prose than in poetry, but cf. Hor. *Od.* 3.3.45–6 [*Roma*] . . . *nomen in ultimas/ extendat oras*; Stat. *Silu.* 1.5.51–2 *amnis/ . . . in fundum summo patet* (Phillimore, OCT) (*TLL* 7.739.5–55).

By using the singular, *lapis*, reinforced by *ipse*, rather than *lapides*, Seneca conveys the idea of the wall building itself gradually, stone by stone, as Amphion played and sang. Both *lapis* and *saxum* (cf. *saxa* 571) can refer to a stone shaped specifically for building purposes (*OLD lapis* 4a, *saxum* 3a) (although presumably the stones used by Amphion did not have to be shaped beforehand).

571–2 haec saxa franges uictor? hinc spolia auferes?/ uinctosque duces All modern editors, with the exception of Zwierlein, punctuate as follows: *haec saxa franges? uictor hinc spolia auferes? uinctosque duces etc.* (Zwierlein has no punctuation mark after *auferes.*) More appealing, however, is Gronovius' punctuation: *haec saxa franges uictor? hinc spolia auferes?*, with *hinc* in the second question balancing *hanc* in the first. The picture conveyed by *haec saxa franges* would thus not be of Polyneices breaking down the walls to gain access to the city, but of his destroying them once Thebes has been captured. This would fit in well with the notion of Polyneices' taking away spoils and leading the inhabitants captive – both of which could only occur after victory had been achieved. *Vinctosque*, the reading of *E* and *T* is universally preferred by modern editors to *uictosque* found in ß and *P*. *Vinctosque* is undoubtedly superior: *uictosque*, in view of *uictor* (571), would be superfluous and weak. The corruption probably occurred under the influence of *uictor.*

572 duces patris aequales tui *Aequales* probably here = 'of the same age', rather than 'of the same status', since Oedipus no longer has any status in Thebes. The victims of war enumerated by Jocasta –

the old and the weak (the women) – are clearly chosen to prick Polyneices' conscience. The reference to Oedipus increases the impact of her words, since, by analogy, Polyneices is prompted to think of his father being led away in chains. (On the question of Oedipus' age, see on *senex* 32.)

573 matresque = *matronasque. Matres* is common in battle descriptions in poetry (so Verg. *Aen.* 2.489, 11.146, 877, 891; Luc. 7.370; Sil. 2.251, 12.599; Stat. *Theb.* 2.480, 7.240), not only for metrical reasons, but because it is more poignant than *matronae*: a *matrona* implies a husband, but a *mater* has children also. Here, *matresque* is especially pointed: Jocasta has invited Polyneices to identify with his father the leaders whom he will take captive; by immediately using *matres* in the same context, she encourages Polyneices to identify the captured women with her, his mother.

ab ipso coniugum raptas sinu Cf. Sen. *Troad.* 798 *talis e nostro sinu/ te rapiet hostis*; *Agam.* 187 *nec rapere puduit e sinu auulsam uiri.* The word order is effective: grammatically, *ipso* qualifies *sinu*, but by its position it gives emphasis also to *coniugum*, thus stressing both the pathos of the situation in which wives are torn from their husband's arms, and the inability of the men to protect their womenfolk.

574 miles The collective singular (which occurs also at 627 and 636) here emphasises the group rather than the individual (LHS 2.13); so Ov. *AA.* 1.97 *cultissima femina*, where women crowding to the games are compared to a swarm of bees and the significance lies in the size of the throng rather than in the nature of the individual women of which it is composed. LHS 2.13 suggests that *miles* is one of several collective singulars (cf. *arator, auditor, hostis, testis*) which originated in the everyday language of the Romans (see further Löfstedt, *Syntactica*, 1.16–17). The subsequent frequency of its use, both in poetry and in prose and in a variety of contexts (see TLL 8.945.18–946.13), suggests, however, that its colloquial flavour was obscured as it became absorbed into the literary language. Seneca, in fact, never uses the plural, *milites*, in any form in his tragedies.

575 adulta uirgo Here, the singular appears to be used instead of the plural in order to focus on an individual from the crowd implied by the situation (cf. *miles* 574, where the singular lays emphasis on the army as a unit rather than as individual soldiers). Löfstedt (*Syntactica*, 1.18) says much the same thing about the use of the singular, *leonem*, in Sall. *Iug.* 6.1 *leonem atque alias feras primus aut in primis ferire.*

576 nuribus . . . Argolicis *Nurus* here probably = '*young* married woman': cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.529 *Mixtae . . . uiris matresque nurusque*, where the distinction is made between the young and the older married women. To imagine the Theban girl as being given as a slave to a *nurus* who would be about her own age, rather than to an older woman, to whom, simply by virtue of her years, she would owe respect, is to add refinement to her humiliation.

eat The present (deliberative) subjunctives here and in *uehar* (578) provide a transition from the contemplation of the future in which Jocasta has been indulging, to the solid reality of the present, to which she returns at the close of her speech, ending strongly with the imperatives *pone* (584) and *refer* (585).

577 an et ipsa *An* here does not, as most frequently in Senecan drama, introduce a question which is an alternative to the one which precedes it (cf. 107, 450); rather it heralds a question containing a more shocking suggestion: 'Is it possible that even I . . .'. *An* is used thus also at Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 1043; *Troad.* 890, 973; *Phoen.* 498; *Agam.* 195; *Thyest.* 745; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1954.

palmas uincta postergum datas Lit. = 'bound behind her back with respect to her surrendered hands.' *Datas* is somewhat ponderous: it is used occasionally elsewhere in poetry of a prisoner offering his hands to be bound (so Sen. *Troad.* 152–3 *non adsuetas ad sceptra manus/ post terga dabit*), but never, as here, in the passive and attributively.

On *postergum/post tergum*, see Zwierlein (OCT), 462.

578 mater triumph praeda fraterni vehar? For *praeda* used of human beings in the context of military conquest, cf. also Sen. *Troad.* 58, 150, 980; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1789. The effect is to dehumanise, by designating people as no more than movable objects of some value. For *praeda* used of people in other contexts, cf. Sen. *Phoen.* 15 [*Actaeon*] . . . *nova praeda canibus* and *OLD praeda* 2b.

triumphi . . . fraterni = 'of a triumph over a brother'; for *triumphus* with an objective genitive in the sense 'triumph over', see *OLD triumphus* 2b; here the objective genitive (*fratris*) has been replaced by an adjective (*fraterni*) (see KS 1.212–13).

For the genitive of origin with *praeda*, cf. Sen. *Troad.* 150 *Argolici praeda triumphi*, where, as at *Agam.* 804 and *Herc. Fur.* 58–9, the suggestion of a Roman triumph occurs in a Greek context. On Seneca's treatment of this, see Walter, 81–9. It was more usual for captives to

be driven into Rome on foot in chains before the chariot of the *triumphator*, but there is archaeological evidence of human booty being transported in wagons (D&S 5.489). On the organisation of the Roman triumph, see Ernst Künzl, *Der römische Triumph: Siegesfeiern im antiken Rom* (Munich, 1988), chap. V.

579 potesne *Potes* is repeated in 580 and again in 581 in an ascending tricolon, the rising tone of which mirrors the advance on, and capture of, Thebes by the enemy forces: the defending Thebans are killed, then the enemy moves against the city itself, and, finally, the city is sacked and burnt. On the sense of *potes* here, see on 531–2.

ciues leto et exitio datos The use of *ciues* here is noteworthy: Jocasta is reminding Polyneices that those whom he will watch being killed are not strangers or people with whom he has no connection, but his own fellow-citizens (see also 635).

With *leto et exitio* compare the English formula 'death and destruction'; Lucr. 4.766 *mortis letique* provides the only close parallel in Latin.

580 passim *Passim* here suggests the abundance of dead bodies (= 'all over the place'), rather than that they are randomly scattered; cf. Liv. 22.2.7 *inter iumenta et ipsa iacentia passim morientes.*

caris Dear to whom? Obviously to Jocasta herself, but that hardly needs to be stated. Perhaps one should see her as trying to rekindle *Polyneices'* affection for, and sense of loyalty to, Thebes.

581 hostem On the collective singular, see on *miles* 574.

581–2 sanguine et flamma potes/ implere Thebas? Jakobi (*Einfluss*, 45) compares Achilles' words in Ov. *Met.* 12.110 *Eetioneasque inpleui sanguine Thebas.*

This appears to be the only instance of the doublet 'blood and fire' in Latin literature (although at Sen. *Const. Sap.* 6.2 one finds *flammas et sanguinem stragemque*). The common combination, in Latin as in English, is 'fire and the sword', *flamma et ferrum* (see *TLL* 6.866.5–20 and cf. *Phoen.* 565–6 *haec telis petes/ flammisque tecta*). Seneca's very avoidance of the cliché is striking, and *sanguine*, especially evocative with the verb *implere* (582), is a powerful substitute for *ferro.*

582–3 tam ferus durum geris/ pectus What Zwierlein describes as the 'preziöse Sperrung' of *E*, appears in *A* as *tam ferum et durum.* This seems to be the work of the interpolator of A, since the reading of *E* is not only rhetorically more effective but is also very Senecan: for an adjective qualifying, or noun in apposition to, the

subject expressed in the verb, cf., in *Phoen.* alone, 6 (*solus*), 32–3 (*senex, infans*), 49 (*miser*), 220 (*nefandus incestificus exsecrabilis*), 230 (*infelix pater*), 289 (*pater*), 291 (*unus*), 379 (*parens*), 459 (*mater*), 460 (*misera*), 477 (*dubius*), 571 (*uictor*), 586 (*profugus*).

For the expression *durum . . . pectus*, cf. 165 *animam duram*, 309–10 *affectus . . . duros.*

583 saeuumque in iras *In iras* depends on *saeuum*: trans. 'fierce in anger'. For this use of *in* with the accusative expressing tendency of feeling or activity, cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.408 *in hoc aptus*, Sen. *Ira* 2.20. *natura quosdam procliues in iram facit* (see further KS 1.566, *OLD in* 16a).

et nondum imperas For the turn of phrase, cf. Sen. *Agam.* 904 *nondum recedunt*, where, as here, the expression both concludes a description of horrifying activity and introduces a further observation on the situation.

584 quid sceptra facient? Cf. also Sen. *Ira* 2.5.5 *Quid hic rex fecisset?* for the notion that a bad tendency in a man's character will become worse the more power he wields.

585 teque pietati refer The dative of place whither after compound verbs is common in verse (cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 5.34, 93, 346, 434, 805) and probably reflects the usage of earlier Latin. It was Vergil, in particular, who extended this usage to uncompounded verbs (cf., e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 5.451 *it clamor caelo* with R.D. Williams (*The Aeneid of Vergil: Books 1–6* (London & Basingstoke, 1972)) *ad loc.*, perhaps influenced also by the early and common use of the dative with expressions denoting delivering over to death (*leto dare* etc.). For a discussion of this construction, see Löfstedt, *Syntactica*, 1.150–9; J. Marouzeau, *Traité de Stylistique latine* (Paris, 1946), 208–10.

586 Ut profugus errem semper? ut patria arcear Spontaneous, natural transitions like this, from one speaker to the next, are rare outside the dialogue passages: the long speeches tend not to be closely linked one to the next.

Cf. 643–4 *Sceleris et fraudis suae/ poenas nefandus frater ut nullus ferat?*; Polyneices' indignation in both instances is revealed by his swift expostulation. On *ut-indignatiuum*, a regular comic usage, see Hirschberg *ad loc.* and KS 2.510.

Editors are divided on the punctuation of this verse, with Leo and others favouring *Ut profugus errem? semper ut patria arcear.* This has little to recommend it: the emotional impact of Polyneices' first expostilation is considerably reduced by the removal of *semper*, and reading

semper ut destroys the rhetorical effect of the anaphora, *ut . . . ut.* Seneca could have written *ut semper errem profugus*, but he wished the emphasis to fall on *semper* rather than on *profugus*: we know that Polyneices is an exile; the issue is whether he is always to remain one.

587 opemque . . . sequar *Sequor* here = 'seek' (as, e.g., at Sen. *Clem.* 2.4.2 *Haec crudelitas quidem, sed quia nec ultionem sequitur*; see *OLD sequor* 16a) rather than 'attain' (as at Sen. *QN.* 2.1.5 *haec quaestio cedet superioribus et . . . meliorem condicionem sequetur*; see *OLD sequor* 17): it is the humiliating insecurity and the dependent nature of his position that Polyneices is trying to express. The basic meaning of *sequor*, 'follow', hovers near the surface, suggesting the great reversal in Polyneices' fortunes: he, who was once a royal leader, is reduced to the status of a humble follower (cf. 597, where this is explicitly stated).

588 quid paterer aliud, si fefellissem fidem? Polyneices is responding implicitly to Jocasta's declaration in 494 that it is better to suffer, than to commit, a wrong. He questions whether there is anything worse that could happen to him than what he is already enduring. Jocasta was speaking from the standpoint of one who recognises an objective moral code which does not evaluate actions in terms of potential gain or loss (cf. Sen. *Ben.* 1.1.12 *Hoc et magni animi et boni proprium est, non fructum beneficiorum sequi, sed ipsa . . .*); Polyneices, in turn, rejects that code and replaces it with one based on expediency (as does Eteocles, more obviously, in 664).

On the Roman legal colouring of this and the following verse, see Walter, 56.

589–90 si peierassem? fraudis alienae dabo/ poenas *Fraudis* may be intended to pick up the idea, implicit in *peierassem*, of deliberate deception from the very time of the making of the agreement. This notion does not occur elsewhere in *Phoen.*, nor is it found in E. *Ph.*, where it is implied that Eteocles, having acquired a taste for power during his year of legitimate rule, refused to relinquish the throne (74–5).

590 at ille praemium scelerum feret *Fero* here = 'acquire' (*TLL* 6.554.45ff.); cf. Caes. *BC.* 1.86.1 *ut . . . ultro praemium missionis ferrent*; Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.11–12 *multa laborum/ praemia laturus.* The expression *praemium sceleris* (*uel sim.*) is elsewhere used ironically of punishment (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.537; Ov. *Met.* 8.503). Here, however, it is used quite literally (cf. Cic. *S. Rosc.* 117 *tribus praediis, hoc est praemiis sceleris, ornatus*; Juv. 8.119 *quanta . . . feres tam dirae praemia culpae*).

591–2 iubes abire? matris imperio obsequor – / da quo reuertar The paradox is very Senecan: Polyneices says that he will go away in obedience to his mother's wishes if she will give him something to return to. In other words, he will abandon his hostile intentions and his pursuit of the throne, if she can offer him some alternative dwelling. That *reuertar* implies a return to *Thebes* is suggested by the comparison between Eteocles' palace and the humble cottage which Polyneices envisages for himself.

Imperium refers here to the authority of the head of the household, to which Jocasta has succeeded since Oedipus' withdrawal from Thebes and from his family. There may be also a secondary and ironical sense of 'military authority', since Jocasta, unarmed and singlehanded, has succeeded in stopping the battle.

592–3 regia frater meus/ habitet superba This is a problematic clause: *E* reads *meus* and *habitat*, whereas *A* has *mea* and *habitet. Meus* is preferable to *mea* because it balances *me* in the following clause better ('my brother' . . . 'me'), and because the important issue here is not Polyneices' right to the kingdom of Thebes (as *mea* would suggest), but the contrast in situation between his brother and himself. The corruption of *meus* to *mea* would have been an easy one, with the proximity of *regia* and *superba. Habitet* of *A* is superior to E's *habitat*: Polyneices, further to the statement of his condition for the withdrawal of his army, says: 'Alright, let Eteocles live in a great palace, and let a small cottage shelter me'. Here, and in 593 *parva* . . . 595 *regnum*, Polyneices is being ironic: the implication is that no–one could seriously expect him to be satisfied with such a humiliating arrangement. Mueller's argument ((1901), 264–5) in support of *habitat* hinges on punctuation, which he supplies as follows:

> *habitat superba: parua me abscondat casa?*
> *hanc date repulso: liceat exiguo lare*
> *pensare regnum?*

He maintains that if one takes *parua* . . . *casa* and *liceat* . . . *regnum* as statements (as Leo and Zwierlein do) the opening words of Jocasta's response, *si regna quaeris* . . . (599), make little sense, since Polyneices has said that he will be content with a small cottage. However, Jocasta understands Polyneices' irony and her opening words clearly pick up *de regno* in 598, not *parua casa* (593). There is thus no reason to change Zwierlein's punctuation.

593 abscondat casa *Abscondat* conveys both the idea that the hut

will shelter Polyneices and that it will hide him so that he will exist in obscurity.

Casa here, as at Lucr. 6.1254–5 *penitusque casa contrusa iacebant/ corpora paupertate et morbo dedita morti*, suggests poverty (i.e. 'hut', 'shanty') in contrast to the wealth of *regia superba*, rather than merely a simple lifestyle (i.e. 'cottage') in the manner of the early Romans (so Tib. 2.5.26).

594 da *A* reads *da*, *E* reads *dare*, which makes no sense and which Leo emended to *date*. *Date*, however, does not improve matters much, for to whom does it refer? Only Jocasta is being addressed, and although Eteocles must be thought of as being present, Polyneices nowhere else addresses him directly. In 592 *da* is undisputed; it seems sensible, therefore, to read *da* in 594 likewise and to dismiss *dare* altogether as resulting from reduplication with the *re-* of *repulso*.

594–5 liceat exiguo lare/ pensare regnum For the contrast, cf. Plin. *Pan.* 47.6 . . . *ut ad paruos penates et larem angustum ex domo principis modestiae et tranquillitatis exempla referantur*; Stat. *Theb.* 2.438–9 *anne feret luxu consueta/ . . . hunc regina larem pauperem*; elsewhere in Senecan drama it forms part of the frequent contrast between the security of a simple life and the dangers of high station: cf. *Herc. Fur.* 192–201, *Thyest.* 446–70.

Isid. *Orig.* 20.2.24 observes: *antiqui domos lares dicebant.* Given the traditionally simple way of life of the *Romani prisci*, this may explain why, even in the literature of the first and second centuries AD, *lar* tends to be used of humble rather than grand dwellings (see *TLL* 7.966.47–75).

coniugi donum datus Since Polyneices lacks home, property, and position, he is without status in his father-in-law's household, and, like a gift, he can be set aside and treated with contempt. The use of *donum* in the marital context recalls Jocasta's lament in 508–10 that Polyneices received no dowry from his father-in-law except military aid. Here Polyneices goes further: not only did he not receive a dowry, but he himself was made over to his wife as a gift.

596 arbitria . . . dura As is indicated by *dura*, *arbitria* here = 'domination' (cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 433 *Imperia dura*) rather than 'whim' or 'caprice' (as in Cic. *Verr.* 5.34 *iura omnia praetoris urbani nutu atque arbitrio Chelidonis meretriculae gubernari*). Cf. E. *Ph.* 425, where, in response to Jocasta's enquiry as to whether Polyneices is happy with his bride or not, Polyneices replies: οὐ μεμπτὸς ἡμῖν ὁ γάμος εἰς τόδ'ἡμέρας.

thalami . . . felicis *Thalami* here = *coniugis*, an extension of the metonomy whereby *thalamus* = 'marriage' or 'marital relations'; it is thus used also at Sen. *Phaedr.* 627 *thalami remittet ille raptorem sui?*, 1216 *ut concremarem prolis ac thalami rogos*; *Herc. Fur.* 427–8 *Effare thalamis quod novis potius parem/ regale munus. Felicis* means 'fortunate' in the material sense, i.e. 'wealthy', as at Sen. *Med.* 217–18 *generosa, felix, decore regali potens/ fulsi*: Polyneices' bride rules him because she is a rich princess and he is a penniless exile. The domination of a wealthy wife is a rhetorical commonplace: cf. Plaut. *Aul.* 167–9:

istas magnas factiones, animos, dotes dapsiles,
clamores imperia, eburata uehicla, pallas, purpuram,
nil moror quae in seruitutem sumptibus redigunt uiros;

Sen. *Contr.* 1.6.5 (ascribed to Julius Bassus) *Omnes uxores diuites seruitutem exigunt*; 1.6.7 (ascribed to Arellius Fuscus Senior) *Inpotens malum est beata uxor. Cum immensum pondus auri orba attulerit, cum pecunia arcas nostras oneravit, quid aliud quam beati serviemus?* (also Juv. 6.224, Jer. *Ep.* 127.3). Contrast Sen. *Troad.* 873–4 [*deus*] . . . *coepit teque felici parat/ dotare thalamo*, where *felici . . . thalamo* most naturally means 'with a happy marriage', although it could mean 'with a rich husband', since Helen goes on to stress the extent of Pyrrhus' kingdom (*cui regna campi lata Thessalici patent* (877).

597 humilis . . . lixa This is the first instance of *lixa* (lit. = 'camp follower') used metaphorically and hyperbolically in poetry to suggest a lowly and degrading position (see *TLL* 7.1550.61–6 for subsequent instances of this use of *lixa*; on its literal use, see Billerbeck, 68 para. 136). It is particularly appropriate in view of Polyneices' military dependence on Adrastus.

598 in seruitutem cadere de regno graue est On concluding *sententiae* of this kind, see on *Phoen.* 198–9.

599–643 Jocasta lists the places where Polyneices may be able to find a kingdom for himself (599–616 *gentes*); she concludes by urging Polyneices not to think of Thebes as a possible kingdom and to imagine that it is still in his father's control (616 *hoc*-617 *patrem*). This leads her to reiterate the impious horror of the war Polyneices has been about to undertake and to claim that exile is preferable to such a war, whereas, she maintains, a war without the danger of impiety would be quite acceptable, even pleasing (617 *Melius*-625 *graviora*). She undermines the latter statement somewhat in the following lines in which she discourses about the uncertainties and dangers of war in

general (*Fors caeca versat* 632), only to return finally to the subject of the war against Eteocles, with *praemium incertum petis,/ certum scelus* (632–3). The final verses are devoted to renewed efforts to convince Polyneices to withdraw from the conflict with Eteocles (633–43).

602–13 On catalogues in Senecan drama, see on 124–31. In this instance, the list of places where Polyneices may seek a kingdom is far from being a random one (contrast the catalogue at 124–31): despite Jocasta's declaration that any land in the whole world will offer a kingdom for Polyneices to conquer (600–1), the areas that she lists fall into a carefully circumscribed area – western Asia Minor (see on *Hermus* 607), which is near enough and wealthy enough to be enticing, though far enough from Thebes to be safe, in Jocasta's view. It may also have suggested itself to Seneca because of the Trojan War (see on 621–2). The order in which the places are mentioned does not seem to have any significance.

602–10 hinc (602) . . . hinc (608) . . . hinc (610) For the threefold repetition of *hinc*, a rhetorical device favoured especially by Seneca and Silius Italicus, cf. also Sen. *Ep.* 88.7, 90.19, 108.30.

602 nota Baccho Tmolus The reading of *E*, *tota*, gives vastly inferior sense: Tmolus, a mountain in Lydia, is described as well known to Bacchus because it was famous for the wine which was produced on its slopes (cf. Verg. *Georg.* 2.97–8; Plin. *HN.* 5.30) and because it was a holy mountain (Aesch. *Pers.* 49; Strab. 13.626) on which the Lydian bacchants practised their rituals (cf. E. *Ba.* 64–5). Perhaps the first explanation is the one which dominates here, since it would be the rich vineyards of Tmolus which would be likely to attract Polyneices.

On the spelling of Tmolus, see Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 127).

603 iacent Zwierlein ((1980), 189) noted that there is confusion elsewhere in the MS tradition of Senecan drama between *iacere* and *patere* (also *latere*; see on 438): he cited *Troad.* 121, 878 and *Thyest.* 649–50. Zwierlein here emended *iacent* of the MSS to *patent*, on the grounds that 'Der Begriff *lata spatia* erfordert das Verb *patere*'. In support of this, he cited various instances where *patere* is used with *spatium* and/or *latus*. These, however, are not conclusive – and Zwierlein does not print his emendation in his OCT text – since elsewhere, albeit not as commonly, these words are used in conjunction with *iacere:* cf. Sen. *QN.* 1 *praef.* 13 *Quantum est enim quod ab ultimis*

litoribus Hispaniae usque as Indos iacet? Paucissimorum dierum spatium; Luc. 4.674–5 *qua lata iacet, uasti plaga feruida regni/ distinet oceanum zonaeque exusta calentis*; Stat. *Theb.* 2.503–4 *semita, quam subter campi deuexaque latis/ arua iacent spatiis*; Avien. *Orb. Terr.* 985 *Phrygiae Minori quae iacet inmensae late sub rupibus Idae.*

604–5 et qua trahens opulenta Pactolus uada On account of the gold which its waters carried, the river Pactolus was, in antiquity, a symbol of wealth: cf. Hor. *Epod.* 15.20; Tib. 3.3.29; Sen. *Oedip.* 467; Juv. 14.298–9 (Otto, *Pactolus*, 261).

For *traho* used of currents, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.305–7 *rapidus . . . torrens/ . . . sternit sata laeta . . . /praecipitisque trahit siluas*, where, as here, *traho* suggests the force needed to convey the river's burden.

On the rare third-foot anapaest, see on 166.

605–6 laetis . . . aruis Perhaps Seneca had in mind the territory around Laodiceia in Phrygia, where the rivers Caprus and Lycus joined the Maeander, and which is said by Strabo to have grown large because of ἡ τῆς χώρας ἀρετὴ, and to have been an excellent sheep-producing district (12.578). *Laetis* of crops or fields is standard: see *OLD laetus* 1 and *TLL* 7.883.80–884.68.

606 flectit errantes aquas The name of the Maeander was proverbial in antiquity, as now, because of its twisting and winding course: cf. Strabo 12.577 σκολιὸς ὢν εἰς ὑπερβολήν, ὥστε ἐξ ἐκείνου τὰς σκολιότητας ἁπάσας μαιάνδρους καλεῖσθαι; also Paus 8.41.3; Ov. *Met.* 8.162–6; Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 683–4; [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 779.

607 Hermus All the MSS read *Hebrus*, which was the principal river of Thrace. Gronovius, however, suggested *Hermus*, which was a Lydian river. He pointed out that *Hebrus* is out of place in a catalogue in which all the other areas mentioned are in Asia Minor. One may note, further, that this river is mentioned together with the Maeander: the Maeander and the Hermus both have their source in Phrygia (the Maeander in Celaenae, the Hermus in the Dindymus Mountains) and it is therefore logical to associate them. Between the Maeander and the Hebrus, however, there is no connection at all. With regard to the *campos fertiles* (607), it is significant that Strabo (13.626) includes the plain of the Hermus among those ὄντα . . . πάντων ἄριστα πεδίων.

608 grata Cereri Gargara Gargara was the name of the highest peak of the Ida mountains in southern Troas (Strabo 13.583) and

the territory around it was renowned for its fertility: cf. Verg. *Georg.* 1.103 *ipsa suas mirantur Gargara messis.*

609 Xanthus . . . niuibus Idaeis tumens As *niuibus Idaeis* indicates, the Xanthus referred to here is not the Lycian river, but the famous river of Troy, which, according to Homer (*Il.* 20.74), was called Xanthus by the gods and Scamander by men; Pliny (*HN.* 5.33), however, mentions the Xanthus and the Scamander as two separate rivers. Strabo (13.602) states that the Xanthus had its source on Mount Ida.

610 hinc qua relinquit nomen Ionii mare All the MSS read *maris* in 610, which is problematic because it leaves the clauses which follow, *aut qua latus iam propius orienti dedit/ tutamque crebris portibus Lyciam uidet* (612–13), without a subject (see Heinsius, *Aduers.*, 58–9; Courtney (1985), 298). Bentley's emendation, *mare,* provides all three clauses with a satisfactory subject (*nomen* would thus be the object of *relinquit* – 'where the sea gives up the name of Ionian'), and, as Zwierlein observes (*Krit. Komm.*, 127–8), the assimilation of *mare* to the genitive, *Ionii,* could easily have occurred. *Ionii* troubled Wilamowitz, who conjectured *Inois mare,* unnecessarily, since the loose sense of *mare Ionium,* meaning the sea around the coast of Ionia (rather than the Ionian Sea proper), is attested elsewhere, notably in Ov. *Fast.* 4.565–7:

hinc init Aegaeum, quo Cycladas aspicit omnes,
Ioniumque rapax Icariumque legit,
perque urbes Asiae longum petit Hellespontum.

Servius (*ad* Verg. *Aen.* 3.211) observes that 'Ionian sea' was the name given to the *sinum . . . immensum ab Ionia usque ad Siciliam.* The reference in *hinc qua . . .* is, of course, to the Hellespont, as the following verse makes clear – Abydos being on the coast of Asia Minor with Sestos opposite it, across the straits on the Thracian coast (cf. Ov. *Trist.* 1.10.27–8 *quodque per angustas uectae male uirginis undas/ Seston Abydena separat urbe fretum*).

Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that the expression *relinquere nomen* occurs also at Hor. *Od.* 3.27.34–5 and Cic. *Parad.* 22.

610–14 Courtney ((1985), 298) objects to the fact that *hinc qua* (610) and *qua* (612) are joined by *aut* rather than *et,* as in 602–5, and that the area designated in 610–11 shows none of the attractions of the places listed earlier. Both these objections fall away if one understands what Seneca means in these lines: the 'Ionian' sea flows around the coast of Asia Minor, and by naming its most northerly point, the

Hellespont, and its most southerly, the Lycian shore, Seneca demarcates not just the Hellespont or Lycia, but the whole area between them as suitable for conquest by Polyneices (so Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 127). In the preceding lines (602–8), Lydia (Tmolus and Pactolus), Phrygia (Maeander and Hermus), Caria (Maeander), Mysia (Gargara and Xanthus) are separately evoked; here, at the climax of his catalogue, Seneca embraces them collectively by referring to the whole coastline washed by the 'Ionian' sea.

611 faucesque Abydo Sestos opposita premit *Fauces* is regularly used of narrow straits (*TLL* 6.398.70–399.20): cf. especially Verg. *Georg.* 1.206–7 *quibus . . . / Pontus et ostriferi fauces temptantur Abydi.* For the unusual phrase *fauces premere*, cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 628–9 *maris gemini premens/ fauces Corinthos* with Tarrant's note; the expression occurs also at Ov. *Met.* 12.509 *silua premat fauces*, where, however, *fauces* has its primary and literal sense of 'throat'.

612 latus . . . propius orienti dedit The subject is still *mare* (see on 610). *Latus* is not uncommonly used in poetry for *litus* (see *TLL* 7.1029.2–10; Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 128). For MS confusion between *litus* and *latus*, cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 114. *Latus dedit* = 'it has presented a shore [nearer to the east]' (*iam* suggests that *dedit* should be construed as a true perfect). For the present/perfect tense variation, cf. 13–21, where *ostentat* (21) stands out as the only present (with perfect sense) in a series of perfects, and 388, where, as here, *stetit* is a single true perfect in a sequence of present verbs. Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 514) notes tense variation also at Sen. *Troad.* 676, *Med.* 136, *Phaedr.* 979, *Oedip.* 726ff.

propius Gronovius' emendation of *propior* of the MSS must be correct, since, as he observes, there is nothing with which *propior* can agree. The substitution of *-or* for *-us* would have been a simple error in view of the following *Orienti.*

613 tutamque crebris portibus Lyciam Strabo (14.664) describes the coast of Lydia as being εὐλίμενος σφόδρα.

614 hac The MSS all have *haec*, which is awkward following *hinc* and *qua* in the preceding lines: Jocasta has been suggesting directions in which Polyneices may look for a kingdom, rather than specific places, which *haec regna* implies. Gronovius suggested *hic*, of which Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 128) observes that *hinc*, which is sometimes found with the sense of *hic*, would be better, in view of the occur-

rence of *hinc* in the preceding lines. Bothe proposed *hac*, which appeals for the reasons which Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 128–9) states: it corresponds with the double *qua* in 610 and 612 (which is nearer than the repetition of *hinc*) and it is the same type of error as is found also at Sen. *Phaedr.* 334 and *Thyest.* 1084, where, in each case, *hac* follows a double *qua*. Furthermore, it is easy to see how *hac* could have been corrupted to *haec* because of the juxtaposition of *regna*; the corruption of *hic* to *haec* would have been less easy.

615 fortis Is Seneca making Jocasta indulge in deliberate irony by calling Adrastus *fortis* here, when in 510 she described him as *hostis*? Probably not; it seems likely that Seneca intends us to perceive it as a piece of unconscious irony on Jocasta's part. It would be characteristic of this protective and emotional woman to change her attitude to a person dramatically once she saw him in a different – and non-threatening – role.

tuo sceptro paret Most editors adopt the word order of *E*, *tuo sceptro paret* (*A* has *paret sceptro tuo*), possibly for the sake of the not particularly striking chiasmus which results from the juxtaposition of *paret* and *tradatque* (616), but, more probably, because *E* is generally more reliable than *A* on word order.

616–17 hoc adhuc regnum puta/ tenere patrem *Hoc* is awkward because of the sudden change of reference of the demonstrative: *hac* (614), *hos* (614), and *has* (615) apply to Asia Minor, but *hoc* (616) must be taken to refer to Thebes, although logically the sentence should mean: 'Imagine that Oedipus is still ruling in Asia Minor'. Moreover, Jocasta's exhortation to self-delusion is curious and rather lame, particularly in the light of 617–18, since Polyneices would not be an exile if his father were still on the throne. Since 617b, *Melius exilium est tibi*, could follow 616a, *tradatque gentes*, without metrical difficulty, it is tempting to delete *hoc . . . patrem* as an interpolation. But Seneca may have introduced the clause to ease the transition from the subject of Polyneices' future kingdom to that of his present exile, and, possibly, to create a connection with the first section (1–362) of the play by referring to Oedipus.

618 alieno I.e. of Eteocles. *Alienus*, as well as meaning simply 'of another', can also have the sense, like English 'alien', of 'unnatural' or 'inappropriate' (see *TLL* 1.1576.61–1578.62; *OLD alienus* 2, 8) and Seneca may have intended his audience to appreciate this secondary sense.

619 istis uiribus I.e. with your father-in-law's military support. *Iste* here simply indicates 'that which you have with you', but cf. *iste* in 618 which has a decidedly pejorative overtone.

620 nullo scelere maculata I.e. neither by the crime which Polyneices would commit if he were to return to Thebes through violence, nor by the crimes by which Thebes has been polluted in the past – the murder of Laius and the incest of Oedipus and Jocasta.

621–1 quin ipse frater . . . / militabit Fantham ((1983), 75 n.23) suggests that Seneca is here thinking of Agamemnon's co-operation with Menelaus in the Trojan War. This may be so, but Seneca is making Jocasta speak with unconscious irony, since the notion of Eteocles and Polyneices fighting side by side in harmony is implausible, to say the least. Seneca here, and in the lines which follow (622–4), is painting a picture of the sort of support and encouragement that Polyneices might expect from a normal family, thereby reminding his audience how far removed from life in the real world Oedipus, Jocasta, and their children are.

623–4 in quo pater materque pugnanti tibi/ fauere possint Jocasta speaks as though she and Oedipus are ordinary parents, sharing the same hopes and fears for their son – an irony which must have been as obvious to Seneca's audience as it is to us, in view of Oedipus' outburst against the young men in 334ff., in which he expresses the hope that they *will* destroy Thebes. Logically, Jocasta must know what Oedipus' real feelings are, since Antigone would have told her, but she appears to ignore them. Must this be explained away in terms of Seneca's lack of concern with realism, or can it be otherwise accounted for? That Seneca was capable of acute psychological insight is undoubted. Perhaps he intended Jocasta's strikingly unconvincing picture of parents and sons happily united in common cause to convey her longing for a normal family life, with her attempt to imagine her sons and husband behaving like other people's sons and husbands reflecting her desire for them to do so. See also on 506–7.

624–5 regna cum scelere omnibus/ sunt exilis grauiora Cf. 598 *in seruitutem cadere de regno graue est.* Jocasta's *sententia* is a response to that of Polyneices, with the key-word, *grauiora*, being given prominence by being reserved to the last word in the sentence.

Sc. *accepta* (*uel sim.*) with *regna. Cum* has a strong instrumental force; for further examples of *cum* used in this way, see *TLL* 4.1369.40–1370.17.

625 sunt exilis grauiora. Nunc belli mala For the rare third-foot anapaest, see on 166.

626 propone dubias Martis incerti uices Jocasta here changes the direction of her argument: thus far she has urged Polyneices to wage war anywhere except against Thebes, but now she points out the risks involved in war in general.

The uncertain fortunes of war are proverbial: cf. Ov. Am. 1.9.29; Liv. 1.33.4; Luc. 4.770; Tac. *Hist.* 4.35.2; Otto, *Fortuna* 6 cites also Caes. *BG.* 6.30, *BC.* 3.38. For parallels in the other plays of Seneca to this type of pleonasm involving a genitival phrase, see Hillen, 26–7, and cf. especially *Med.* 741 *opacam Ditis umbrosi domum.*

Propono = 'imagine', 'picture to oneself' is more usually found with *sibi, animo, ante oculos, uel sim.* (*OLD propono* 5b), but cf. Sen. *Suas.* 1.4 *immanes propone beluas,* where, as here, *propono* is used absolutely. Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 222 observes that *propone* has a declamatory ring.

627–9 Cf. Sen. *Suas.* 2.1 for a similar construction: *Loco tuti sumus. Licet totum classe Orientem trahat, licet intuentibus explicet inutilem numerum.*

627 licet omne tecum Graeciae robur trahas Cf. 325 *in bella cunctos Graeciae populos agit* and see note *ad loc. Robur* is metonomy for *milites robusti*; it is not used in this way elsewhere by Seneca, but cf., e.g., Liv. 10.14.9 *ex omnium Samnitium populis quodcumque roboris fuerat contraxerant*; Luc. 3.516–17 *Graia iuuentus/ omne suum fatis uoluit committere robur* (*OLD robur* 6b).

628 miles On the collective singular, see on 574.

630 quodcumque Mars decernit It is better to punctuate, as Zwierlein does, with a full-stop after *est* (629), and to take this clause together with what follows, rather than as the tail-end of the *sententia, fortuna . . . loco est* (so Leo), thus weakening its impact. *Quodcumque* thus = 'everything' rather than 'according to whatever' (as in 362).

631 licet impares sint, gladius The implication of *licet impares sint* is that Polyneices' forces are more powerful than those of Eteocles, which is plausible if he has with him *omne . . . Graeciae robur* (627).

There are no parallels for the hiatus in the fourth foot demanded by *gladio,* the reading of *E,* which requires that *Mars* be the subject of *exaequat*: 'he makes the two equal . . . by the sword'. For the metonomy, *gladius* = *bellum,* cf. also Sen. *Troad.* 284.

632 Fors caeca uersat There is MS consensus on *sors,* which

Ascensius corrected to *Fors*. Confusion in the MSS between *fors* and *sors* is not uncommon and the corruption of *fors* to *sors* occurs more frequently than vice versa. In support of *Fors,* Zwierlein (OCT) cites Verg. *Ecl.* 9.5, where the expression *fors . . . uersat* occurs. The epithet *caeca* also favours the reading *Fors,* since it is proverbially applied to *Fortuna* (Otto, *Fortuna* 1), with which *Fors* is frequently linked for emphasis (see *TLL* 6.1129.45–81).

632–3 praemium incertum petis,/ certum scelus For paronomasia of this kind in Senecan drama, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 364 *sed arma felix teneat, infelix paret*; *Oedip.* 841–2 *nec notus satis,/ nec rursus iste uultus ignotus mihi.*

633–4 Fauisse fac uotis deos/ omnes tuis The word order gives emphasis to *fauisse* and *tuis*: Jocasta has been at pains to stress the uncertainty of the fortunes of war and thus the possibility of Polyneices' defeat; now, by contrast, she creates a scenario in which Polyneices' wishes are actually granted.

635–6 ciues . . . miles Both subjects are withheld to the end of their respective clauses immediately preceding a sense-break. They are thus thrown into relief and drawn together to suggest the upheaval and destruction of human life in all spheres. On the collective singular, *miles,* see on 574.

636 obtexit agros miles The image seems to be an adaptation by Seneca of the common poetic hyperbole whereby a fleet is described as covering or hiding the sea (see Pease on Verg. *Aen.* 4.582 *latet sub classibus aequor*; Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 41). Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that Seneca may have influenced Lucan's description of the battlefield at Pharsalus (7.794–5): *iuuat Emathiam non cernere terram/ et lustrare oculis campos sub clade latentes.*

637 uictorque fratris spolia deiecti geras Here Jocasta does not specify what spoils Polyneices will carry off, but one is reminded of 571–8, where the spoils are enumerated, and in particular, of 578, the climax of the catalogue, *mater triumphi praeda fraterni uehar.* Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that *spolia gero* is prosaic and compares Liv. 42.61.9 *spolia caesorum hostium umeris gerentes. Deicti* = 'ousted (from power)', rather than 'killed' (so Hirschberg), the contrast being with *uictor*; cf. Cic. *Mur.* 79 *Hi . . . consulem . . . deici de urbis praesidio et de custodia ciuitatis uestris sententiis deturbari uolunt,* Sen. *Cons. Marc.* 6.16.12 *regem Romanis capitibus Lucretia et Brutus deiecerunt* (*TLL* 5.399.1–43).

638 frangenda palma est *Plangenda* (Iac. Gronovius) and *lugenda* (Bentley) have been offered as alternatives to the MSS' *frangenda.* There seems, however, to be no good reason to emend *frangenda*: firstly, the metaphor is a striking one, which occurs also at Curt. 9.2.29 *Ne infregeritis in manibus meis palmam,* albeit in a rather different sense (Alexander envisages the victor's palm as being already in his hands and he implores his soldiers not to deprive him of it by refusing to fight further); secondly, neither *plangenda* nor *lugenda* conveys the same sense as *frangenda* – that Polyneices' victory, because of the nature of the contest, would actually be tainted.

According to Livy (10.47.3), in 292BC *palmaeque tum primum translato e Graeco more uictoribus datae.*

tu hoc bellum This is the version of *E*; *A* reads *id bellum.* Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 129) suggests that corruption in *A* could have resulted through the influence of 491 and 622–3, where the formula *id bellum, in quo* occurs. This is not very convincing, given that even 622–3 is some distance away and that the phrase is unremarkable. More tellingly, however, he observes that nowhere else in the corpus of Senecan drama does *id* stand in elision, and he draws attention to [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 448, where, as here, *A* reads *id* for *hoc,* and where likewise *hoc* is probably correct, being more emphatic where emphasis is desirable.

639 execrandum uictor admittit nefas For *execrandum* with *nefas,* cf. Sen. *Troad.* 44 *uidi execrandum regiae caedis nefas,* where the *nefas* referred to is the murder of Priam even as he clung to the altar as a suppliant: the adjective thus conveys the notion of a crime of unsurpassed heinousness. Billerbeck, 81 para. 179, observes that *execrandus* in its adjectival form is not attested before Seneca and that it is rare even in prose before late Latin.

The word order, with *execrandum* separated from *nefas* but juxtaposed with *uictor,* has the effect of linking the adjective not only with *nefas,* to which it belongs syntactically, but also, by proximity, with *uictor.*

640 infelix Here = 'misguided'; it is not used thus elsewhere in the dramas, but cf. Sen. *Ep.* 89.22 *Infelices, ecquid intellegitis . . .?* and 94.62 *Agebat infelicem Alexandrum furor* (for examples in other authors, see *TLL* 7.1364.24–45). The juxtaposition of *infelix* with *uincere* highlights the anomalous situation: usually only a triumphant general would be described as *felix* (cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 364–5 *sed arma felix*

teneat, infelix paret,/ nihil relinquent bella), but in this instance, Polyneices is said to be *infelix* even to wish for victory.

641 cum uiceris, lugebis This should not be taken as a prophetic statement that victory will be Polycneices' in the coming battle; rather, it is simply a manner of speaking, 'when' being more definite and thus rhetorically more effective than 'if'. *Lugebis* contrasts with *gaudet* in 640.

641–2 infaustas . . . pugnas The traditional curse of Oedipus on his sons is transformed in *Phoen.* into an exhortation (see on 355) and there is no direct reference to the general curse on the house. The semantic range of *infaustus*, however, includes 'accursed' (see on 3). As Hirschberg observes *ad loc.*, the position of *infaustas*, before the imperative and separated from *pugnas*, is very emphatic.

age/ dimitte For *age* followed immediately by another imperative, cf., e.g., Sen. *Troad.* 509–10 *age/ aude*, 963–4 *age/ elabere*, 1000–1 *age/ reclude.* In all these instances, the second imperative gains weight, not only from the intensifying force of *age* (see Servius' comment below), but also because of its position in the verse. Servius on Verg. *Aen.* 2.707 explained the formula as follows: *'age' . . . non est modo uerbum imperantis, sed hortantis aduerbium, adeo, ut plerumque 'age facite' dicamus et singularem numerum copulemus plurali.*

642–3 libera patiam metu,/ luctu parentes The chiasmus gives emphasis to Jocasta's final plea by juxtaposing the alliterative *metu . . . luctu*, which is enclosed by another alliterative pair, *patriam . . . parentes.* For the expression, *libera metu*, cf. also Sen. *Troad.* 551 *libera Graios metu*, *Med.* 271 *libera ciues metu.* Cf. also the well-known words of Cicero to Catiline (*Cat.* 1.20): *egredere ex urbe, Catilina; libera rem publicam metu*, with which, as Walter observes, 66–8, Seneca shows his familiarity in *Med.* 269–71 (see also Costa *ad loc.*).

The irony in *luctu parentes* is striking, since *luctus* in no way describes the emotion expressed by Oedipus at his sons' behaviour (see on 623–4).

644 ut . . . ferat A result, not a purpose, clause (*pace* Miller: 'That my cursed brother *may receive* no penalty for his crime and treachery').

645 ne metue Cf. 495 (with note *ad loc.)* and 555; cf. also Sen. *Phaedr.* 993, 1240; *Agam.* 796; *Thyest.* 980.

645–6 poenas et quidem soluet graues:/ regnabit The unde-

sirability of kingship is a recurrent theme in Senecan drama; cf. *Oedip.* 6–11, 674–5; *Agam.* 57–107; *Thyest.* 424–5. Here, however, kingship is not presented as being undesirable *per se*; it is specifically the holder of the Theban throne who is not to be envied in view of the unhappy history of his predecessors (for the thought, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 386ff. with Fitch's note).

The turn of phrase is characteristically Senecan: cf. *Herc. Fur.* 1316–17 *eat ad labores hic quoque Herculeos labor:/ uiuamus*, *Med.* 19–20 *Num peius aliquid? quod precer sponso malum?/ uiuat*, 25–6 *parta iam, parta ultio est:/ peperi.*

646 est haec poena This is the reading of the MSS with the exception of ψ, a late MS of the *A* family (see Tarrant, *Sen. Agam.*, 86), which has: Pol. *haec est poena.* Scriverius emended to *haecne est poena*, and again assigned the question to Polyneices, with *si dubitas* ... being Jocasta's reply. Although the MSS frequently fail to designate the speaker, especially in the last few lines of this play, it is nevertheless unnecessary to assume a change of speaker at this point. Jocasta's insistence in *est haec poena* is quite understandable in view of the fact that kingship is not generally regarded as a *poena* and especially not by Polyneices. Heinsius (*Aduers.*, 59) suggested that what Jocasta said was *est hoc poena?*, with *hoc* = *regnare.* As this is simply another way of expressing insistence about the same thing, there seems to be little reason to emend the text to exchange a statement for a question.

646–7 si dubitas, auo/ patrique crede This sort of argument is used elsewhere by Seneca in self-address: cf. *Agam.* 51–2 *quid ipse temet consulis torques rogas,/ an deceat hoc te? respice ad patrem: decet; Thyest.* 241–3 *quid stupes? tandem incipe/ animosque sume: Tantalum et Pelopem aspice;/ ad haec exempla poscuntur meae* (cf. Ov. *Met.* 6.634 *cui sis nupta, uide, Pandione nata*).

647 Cadmus hoc dicet tibi Cadmus suffered the unhappy fate of being turned into a serpent because Ares wished to punish him for killing his sacred dragon, which guarded the spring at Thebes (cf. Hyginus *Fab.* 6; also Ov. *Met.* 4.572–603). This occurred after he had left Thebes and gone to Illyria (cf. Apollod. 3.5.4; Paus. 9.5.3), not voluntarily, according to Diodorus (19.53.5), but because he and his followers were driven from the city after it had been sacked by the Encheleans (contrast Ov. *Met.* 4.564–5, which says that Cadmus left Thebes *luctu serieque malorum/ uictus et ostentis, quae plurima uiderat*).

648 Cadmique proles After Cadmus left Thebes for Illyria, the throne is said by one tradition to have passed immediately to his son, Polydorus (Paus. 9.5.3; E. *Ph.* 8), of whose end nothing is known. This tradition represents Pentheus as ἴσχυε μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς κατὰ γένους ἀξίωμα καὶ φιλίᾳ τοῦ βασιλέως (Paus. 9.5.4). The other tradition makes Pentheus the heir to Cadmus' throne (Apollod. 3.5.2; E. Ba. 44–5) and Polydorus his successor (Apollod. 3.5.5). Pentheus' fate is referred to several times in Sen. *Phoen.* (cf. also 15–18, 364–5). Cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 268 and *Oedip.* 110, where *Cadmi* (*Cadmea* in *Herc. Fur.*) *proles* refers specifically to contemporary descendants of Cadmus, viz. Hercules and the Theban people respectively, which cannot be the case here.

Thebano Ascensius (Paris, 1514) emended the reading of the MSS, *Thebano,* to *Thebarum,* an emendation accepted by Zwierlein, who argues that *illa* in 650 demands that *sceptra* be given 'einem präzisierenden Attribut' since Seneca is not making a general statement about the failure to retain power of those who have broken faith (*Krit. Komm.*, 129). This seems like pedantry: in a context where the burning issue is the broken agreement of two Thebans concerning the kingship of Thebes, and Jocasta is speaking about the unhappy history of that kingship, the most natural way to take *nec . . . illa* would surely be as referring specifically to the Theban throne.

648–9 fuit/ . . . nulli gerere The formula *est* + infinitive (= 'it is possible') is a Graecism (e.g. ἔστιν ἰδεῖν). Found first in Mumm. Atell. 1, Varro (quoted in Gell. 18.12.9), Lucr. 2.16, it was adopted by the Augustan poets and later by Silver Latin poets; it was never popular with prose writers. See Bömer on Ov. *Met.* 3.478, Erich Koestermann (*Cornelius Tacitus: Annalen,* 4 vols. (Heidelberg, 1963–8)) on Tac. *Ann.* 16.34.1, LHS 2.349.

For the notion that the weight of precedent makes it impossible that anyone should rule happily in Thebes, cf. Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 386–96. Fitch *ad loc.* observes that 'precedent' often forms the basis of arguments, rhetorical points, or action in Seneca; in *Phoen.*, cf. especially 331–8 and 356–8.

649–50 nec quisquam fide/ rupta tenebat illa Most modern editors have read *tenebit* with *E*, but Zwierlein (*Krit. Komm.*, 129–30), following Gronovius, prefers *tenebat* (*A*), on the grounds that *iam numeres licet/ fratrem inter istos* (650–1) shows that Jocasta, in the preceding lines of her speech, was not including Eteocles in the number of unlucky kings of Thebes: hence, the future, *tenebit,* is out of place. He argues,

moreover, that the effect of *tenebit* is weak, because it is generalising – linking breach of faith to loss of kingship in every case and ignoring the specific instance of the curse on the house of Thebes. *Tenebat*, on the other hand, produces 'eine Steigerung' in that *nec . . . tenebat illa* implies that the curse on the house of Thebes is all the more certain to overtake Eteocles, since none of his predecessors could avoid it and they did not, like him, commit the crime of breaking an oath (he compares Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 488–9 *eris inter istos – qui tamen nullo stupro/ laesere thalamos*). Zwierlein perhaps makes too much of 'der Fluch', since the notion of a general curse on the house of Thebes (stemming from Laius' disobedience to Apollo in begetting a child) is nowhere directly referred to in *Phoen.* (see on *infaustum* 3); that apart, his arguments are compelling. One might add, moreover, that if one were to read *tenebit*, *istos* (651) would lose much of its impact, because it refers not to the definite past but to the hypothetical future.

650 iam *Iam* here is more causal than temporal: it introduces a conclusion to an argument and virtually = *ergo*. The usage is rather uncommon and almost exclusively prosaic; in poetry, cf. Lucr. 2.1052–4 and see *TLL* 7.128.77–129.9 for instances in prose authors.

651–64 This is the only passage of stichomythia, or rather, of partial stichomythia (not all the exchanges consist of single lines), in the play. Although brief, it reveals two of the most striking characteristics of Senecan stychomythic dialogue: the network of verbal echoes by which the dialogue proceeds (*numeres* 650 and *numeret* 651, *regna* 653 and *regnare* 654, *inuisus* 653 and *inuisus* 654, *imperia* 660 and *imperi* 661), and the gnomic nature of the statements which set forth uncompromisingly two opposing intellectual positions (cf. especially 654, 659, 660, 664). For these features in the stichomythic exchanges in other Senecan plays, cf. *Herc. Fur.* 422–38, 446–55; *Troad.* 327–36; *Med.* 159–73; *Oedip.* 511–29, 699–706; *Agam.* 145–54; *Thyest.* 204–20.

The subject of the dialogue – how a king can rule most effectively – is a recurrent one in Senecan drama: cf. *Med.* 195–6, 439; *Troad.* 259–60; *Oedip.* 699–706; *Thyest.* 204–18.

651–3 ascribo All the MSS read . . . *istos.* POL. *numero et est tanti mihi . . . iacere*, with *A* giving *te turbae exulum/ ascribo* (652–3) to Jocasta. Polyneices' words in this case must mean: 'I do count him [as one of the doomed kings] and [being doomed] is worth it for *me* if I can lie with kings'. Thus Polyneices is rejecting outright Jocasta's final attempt to make him renounce the Theban throne, and the rest of the

dialogue (653–64) takes place between him and Jocasta. *A*'s allocation of *te turbae exulum/ ascribo* to Jocasta clearly makes no sense; for it to do so, either *te* should be emended to *me* (not a problem, since the text is confused at this point anyway, with *E* reading *et urbi*), or the words must be given to Polyneices. Either way, there are difficulties when one considers these verses and those that follow in the light of the treatment of the legend as a whole.

If one accepts the MSS' presentation of 651–64 as an exchange between Polyneices and Jocasta, one must believe that Seneca transferred to Polyneices the ruthless greed which in the Euripidean play characterises Eteocles – a theory which does not fit well with the sympathy for Polyneices' plight which has been generated through Jocasta's description of the trials of his exile (502–13) and by his own account of his humiliating position vis-à-vis his wife (586–98). Furthermore, the notion of Jocasta's retiring into exile, whether enforced or voluntary, is problematic in terms of the traditional form of the legend, in which she kills herself at the mutual murder of her sons. Heinsius' emendation (*Aduers.*, 59), which reads: POL: *Numero me: et est tanti mihi/ Cum regibus iacere. hunc turbae, i, exulum/ Adscribe,* with *hunc* referring presumably to Eteocles, is rather radical. It seems that one should consider the conjectures of Birt ((1879), 523) and Schmidt, 20, both of whom introduce Eteocles at this point. Birt's suggestion was: POL. *Numero.* ET. *Me est tanti mihi . . . ascribo*, whereas Schmidt proposed: ET. *Numeret, est tanti mihi/ cum regibus iacere.* The latter is without doubt rhetorically more effective, since for Polyneices to echo Jocasta's words is simply to slow down the pace of the dialogue without adding anything worthwhile to it, whereas Eteocles' defiant flinging back at Jocasta of her *numeres* is swift and forceful. The dialogue which ensues takes place between Jocasta and Eteocles, which makes sense in terms of Jocasta's words at 459–66, where it is implied that she will turn her attention to Eteocles after she has spoken to Polyneices (it is also borne out by 663 *coniugem*; see commentary *ad loc.*). Polyneices does not speak again in the remaining portion of the text, the words *te . . . ascribo* (652b–653) being spoken by Eteocles and addressed to Polyneices (see below).

This line allocation, however, is not without problems. Eteocles must be imagined as having been silently present throughout the discussion between Jocasta and Polyneices; on the awkwardness of this in terms of staging, see Intro., 40. Another difficulty is the sudden silence of Polyneices, especially since his rejection of Jocasta's

plea that he abandon his attempt to recover the Theban throne has never been made explicit and Jocasta appears to have had the last word with *Ne metue. poenas et quidem soluet graues . . . inter istos* (645–51). The doubt concerning Polyneices' position may, however, have been a deliberate touch introduced by Seneca as a red herring of uncertainty in a story whose conclusion, in terms of the tradition, was entirely predictable.

652–3 te turbae exulum/ ascribo Jocasta has referred several times to Polyneices as an exile (372, 466, 502, 513, 625) and Polyneices has called himself *profugus* (586); thus, on the face of it, Axelson's assumption that Eteocles has already formally exiled Polyneices (see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 130) seems not unreasonable. If this is so, *te . . . ascribo* must be addressed to Jocasta (so Hirschberg, 17), a Senecan embellishment to the traditional form of the legend which accords well with his tendency to paint his villains in the blackest colours possible. It should be noted, though, that in E. *Ph.* at the equivalent point in the plot, Eteocles formally and unambiguously exiles Polyneices (603), who has, however, already previously been referred to as an exile (76, 319, 369, 378, 388, 390, 396, 417). It is thus clear that the term 'exile' is, in that case, used loosely of voluntary exile as well as of formal banishment. Thus, the previous application to Polyneices in Sen. *Phoen.* of terms such as *exul* and *profugus* need prove nothing about his offical status, and there is no reason to assume that it is Jocasta who is being addressed with *te . . . ascribo.* In view of the lack of dialogue between Eteocles and Polyneices (on the significance of this, see Intro., 21), that this should be the only direct communication between them is particularly telling. An actor would, of course, by gesture and intonation, have no difficulty in making it clear that it is Polyneices to whom these words apply; the same would not be true of a reciter (on the staging question, see Intro., 37ff.).

653 ascribo. JOC. Regna, dummodo inuisus tuis If Eteocles is the speaker for 651 *Numeret* to 653 *ascribo,* as seems likely, *Regna dummodo inuisus tuis* should be attributed with the MSS to Jocasta, rather than, following Grotius, to Polyneices, since, apart from considerations of the flow of the dialogue, for Polyneices to abandon his claim to the throne and retire from the conflict would be an impossibly bold departure from the accepted ending of the legend (see further Intro., 11–12).

This is the only instance in *Phoen.* of a change of speaker after the

second thesis (in all other cases of ἀντιλαβή – 347, 414, 480, 643, 651 – the division occurs after the third thesis); a change of speaker at this point in the verse occurs only thirteen times in the whole of Senecan tragedy (see Strzelecki, 4).

654–9 As with 651 *Numeret*-653 *ascribo*, *E* allocates these lines to Polyneices (*A* does likewise), and, with consistency, gives 661–2 and 664 to Polyneices in addition (*A* does not indicate the speaker in either place). Grotius reassigned the lines, giving them all to Eteocles, which must be correct if Eteocles is the speaker in 651 *Numeret*-653 *ascribo* (see above).

654 Regnare non uult, esse qui inuisus timet The unemphatic hyperbaton results from metrical exigencies: neither *qui esse inuisus* not *qui inuisus esse* can be accommodated. For the thought, cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 703–4 *Odia qui nimium timet/ regnare nescit: regna custodit metus.*

654–8 For the paradox that a king's power is increased by his people's hatred, cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 211–12, where Atreus rejoices in insincere praise since he sees it as a measure of his power, there being no reason to flatter those without power.

On the absence of *clementia* in Senecan tyrants, both those in the prose works and those in the dramas, see Walter, 122–3.

655 simul ista mundi conditor posuit deus The inevitability, in Eteocles' view, of the association of royal power with hatred is expressed in his assertion that Jupiter himself established it thus. The effect is to reinforce our perception of him as a deeply corrupt individual, not merely because what he says is palpably false, but because we suspect that, in his fanatical lust for power, he has convinced himself that it is true. With this declaration, Eteocles enters the dark, twisted world of Lycus (*Herc. Fur.*) and Atreus (*Thyest.*).

Mundi conditor as an appellation of Jupiter, first found at Manil. 2.701, occurs elsewhere in classical Latin only at Sen. *Ep.* 119.15, and was adopted by Christian authors and commonly used with reference to God (*TLL* 4.146.83–147.22). As applied to Jupiter, the phrase has different connotations when used by Manilius and by Seneca: Manilius speaks of the *conditor mundi* in connection with his ordering of the stars; he would thus appear to be thinking of Jupiter in his primary function as discerned by the Greeks, as god of the sky (*mundus*) (on this, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (London, 1950), 37–40). Seneca, both here and in *Ep.* 119, where the phrase is

embellished by the clause *qui nobis uiuendi iura discripsit*, has in mind the extended role played by Jupiter as the 'father of gods and men'. This role was first attributed to Zeus by Homer in the *Iliad* (cf., e.g., *Il.* 1.544, 15.47; on the development of this role, see C. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera: Archetypal Image of Father, Husband and Wife* trans. Christopher Holme (London, 1975), 46–7) and found its way into Roman thinking via epic (cf. Enn. *Ann.* 592 (ed. Otto Skutsch (Oxford, 1985)) *patrem diuomque hominumque*; Verg. *Aen.* 1.254 *hominum sator atque deorum.*

regis hoc magni reor In support of *hoc* (*E*) over *et* (*A*), Zwierlein cites Sen. *Oedip.* 82–3 *regium hoc ipsum reor:/ aduersa capere* and, less tellingly, *Med.* 222–3 *hoc reges habent/ magnificum et ingens* (*Krit. Komm.*, 130).

657 odia ipsa premere *Ipsa* of *E* gives superior sense to *A*'s *ista*: *ista* is merely deictic (= 'that hatred of which I have just been speaking'); *ipsa* gives emphasis not only to *odia* but to the whole phrase (= 'actually to suppress hatred'). For *ipse* used to emphasise an extreme idea, cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.11 *eas non modo nihil adiuuare arbitror . . . , sed ipsam deprauare naturam*; Ov. *Her.* 12.61 *hinc amor, hinc timor est; ipsum timor auget amorem.* The supression of hatred by fear is said by Seneca in *Clem.* 1.12.3 to be the mark of a tyrant. Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that the expression *odia premere* occurs later in Plin. *Pan.* 62.5 *Non iam dissimulandus est amor ne noceat, non premendum odium ne prosit.*

Axelson's conjecture of *petere* for *premere* (see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 130) was influenced by Sen. *Oedip.* 710 *non haec Labdacidas petunt* (*E*; *premunt A*) *fata*, where *petunt* is the superior reading (see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 248). It appeals in that it results in an even more extreme thought, but in view of the fact that *premere*, on which there is MS consensus, gives good sense (see Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 130 for parallels; also *OLD premo* 20b), there seems to be little justification for emending the text.

The unspoken corollary of *odia ipsa premere* is *nec odia timere*, the fear that is provoked by fear being proverbial; cf. Sen. *Oedip.* 705–6 *Qui sceptra duro saeuus imperio gerit,/ timet timentis* and Tarrant on Sen. *Agam.* 72–3.

657–8 multa dominantem uetat/ amor suorum *Suorum* is subjective: Eteocles is speaking of the people's feelings for him – hatred or love – not vice versa. The implication is that if a ruler is loved by his subjects, his power depends on their favour, a restrictive situation which would not be to Eteocles' liking. For a different

expression of a similar idea, cf. Sen. *Thyest.* 214–15 *Ubicumque tantum honesta dominanti licent,/ precario regnatur.* It is significant that both Atreus and Eteocles use the term *dominans* with its suggestion of tyranny, rather than *rex*. Cf. Sen. *Clem.* 1.11.4, where he explains the difference between tyrants and kings as follows: *tyranni in uoluptatem saeuiunt, reges non nisi ex causa ac necessitate*; he observes that a king survives to hand over his throne to his descendants, whereas the rule of a tyrant is *exsecrabilis ac breuis* (cf. *Phoen.* 660). See further Intro., 36 n.153.

658 plus in iratos licet He can exercise his power more freely over these, because he does not depend upon their goodwill.

659 qui uult amari, languida regnat manu Cf. the famous words of Accius, quoted by Seneca at *Clem.* 1.20.4: *oderint dum metuant*; also *Clem.* 1.3.3 *Illius demum magnitudo stabilis fundataque est, quem omnes tam supra se esse quam pro se sciunt.* Eteocles is the embodiment of the kind of ruler that Seneca condemns to Nero in *Clem.* For love as the guarantor of a king's safety, cf. Isoc. *Ad Nic.* 21; Cic. *Marcell.* 21.

660 Inuisa numquam imperia retinentur diu A recurring thought in Senecan drama: cf. *Troad.* 258–9 *uiolenta nemo imperia continuit diu,/ moderata durant*; *Med.* 196 *Iniqua numquam regna perpetuo manent*; *Thyest.* 215–17 *Ubi non est pudor/ nec cura iuris sanctitas pietas fides,/ instabile regnum est* (cf. also *Clem.* 1.11.4, 1.25.3–26.1). Also noteworthy is *Herc. Fur.* 341–5, which refers to the insecurity of a ruler who holds by force a throne usurped.

661 Praecepta melius imperi reges dabunt The uncompromisingly direct statement by Jocasta in 660 admits of no response by Eteocles (contrast *Thyest.* 215–17, where the slightly more guarded expression of the same idea – befitting a servant as opposed to a mother – allows Atreus to snap out a retort). He sidesteps and haughtily, but rather weakly, tells Jocasta to mind her own business and organise Polyneices' exile.

662 exilia tu compone *E* reads *oppone*, *A dispone*. Axelson conjectured *compone* on the grounds that *dis-* could not have been corrupted to *opp-*, but that *comp-* could have been (Zwierlein, *Krit. Komm.*, 130). *Dis-* in *A*, by this argument, has to be an attempt to correct the *opp-* of the archetype.

The exile referred to is that of Polyneices (see on 652–3), and Eteocles is, in effect, dismissing Jocasta from his life along with Polyneices.

663 Patriam penates coniugem/ flammis dare This swift interjection by Jocasta conveys her desperation and frustration. She uses the argument which she used on Polyneices in 555–80, although here it is more tersely and starkly expressed because of the heightened tension. Polyneices was moved to plead his cause (586–98), but Eteocles' response is unhesitating rejection of his homeland and family.

In none of the other extant treatments of the Oedipus legend is there any mention of Eteocles' wife. There are, however, various references in Greek prose authors to Eteocles' son, Laodamas (Ion of Chios, cited in Sallustius' hypothesis to *S. Ant.*; Hdt. 5.61; Paus. 9.5.13), which suggest that he was married. We know, of course, that Polyneices has a wife, but the fact that she would not be directly endangered by the war, being in Argos, supports the view that it is Eteocles who is being addressed here (see on 651–3).

664 Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene Cf. E. *Ph.* 504–6:

ἄστρων ἂν ἔλθοιμ'ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολὰς
καὶ γῆς ἔνερθεν . . . ,
τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην ὥστ'ἔχειν Τυραννίδα

and 524–5 εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι/ κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν; also Sen. Clem. 1.26.5 *multos quidem occidere et indiscretos incendii ac ruinae potentia est.* Hirschberg *ad loc.* observes that an act is concluded with a *sententia* in *Phaedr.* 735 also, but suggests that Seneca would not have ended a whole play thus, since no other Senecan drama ends with a *sententia*; on the ending of the play, see Intro., 11–12.

APPENDIX

OCCURRENCE OF FAMILY TERMS OUTSIDE CHORAL LYRICS*

	Total	HF	Tr.	Ph.	Med.	Phae.	Oed.	Thy.	Ag.
(g)nata	19	0	5	6	3	0	1	0	4
(g)natus	129	23	19	14	17	15	14	20	7
parens	96	16	14	18	3	14	17	7	7
genitor	56	13	3	10	5	12	5	7	1
mater	103	5	25	31	12	11	15	1	3
pater	138	24	17	25	17	9	10	17	19
paternus	27	1	5	6	2	3	3	3	4
frater	91	8	1	25	10	4	4	33	6
fraternus	9	1	0	2	2	0	0	2	2
maternus	14	0	5	4	0	1	2	0	2
filia	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
coniunx	75	18	11	3	11	10	6	3	13
uxor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
soror	25	4	1	3	2	4	3	1	7
maritus	9	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	2
genetrix	7	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	1
patrius	24	4	3	4	2	4	1	2	4
filius	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
liberi	32	2	3	4	8	0	2	11	2
auus	12	2	2	2	1	1	0	3	1
auia	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
nepos	13	0	4	1	2	0	0	3	3
Total	882	121	120	160	101	93	84	113	90
Total no. of lines excl. choral odes		1050	950	664	768	1047	758	817	755
Average distribution of family terms: one per x no. of lines		8.7	7.9	**4.2**	7.6	11.3	9.0	7.2	8.4

*Figures based on Zwierlein's text.

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